

10-77

## THE UNEXPECTED

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It was certainly not an easy birth. Since several hours the midwife, her voluntary and involuntary helpers and just everybody around, dispensed freely counsel about how to lure the baby out. They tried everything, rubbing the belly of the woman in various angles and degrees, ordering her to push or to stand still, guiding her how to breath, forcing her to change positions, often contradicting each other and quarrelling among themselves. The last word was with the midwife, a little elderly energetic woman who never in life read anything for the simple reasons she was illiterate. But she was the top midwife in town and she had assisted to hundreds of births in all the past years. This was for her a particular case and she knew that it was above her skills and ability. Though confused, she kept her cool and the air of the undisputed authority. It was just what it was needed.

All to no avail as the painful hours passed. This was a "dry birth". The baby could not "float". In the early morning hours, the "liquids" came out prematurely. She kept silent until she could no more stand it. Now, the baby's head stuck somewhere in the pelvis, frantically struggling all the time to free it loose, moving and kicking and turning incessantly to all directions, causing a lot of commotion into the belly. The pains increased and increased ad infinitum and became unbearable. In such a time one wonders what can be the limit of human endurance to pain. Her screams reached the highest pitch, piercing the air in that big house and the whole neighborhood.

Then, in the midst of the general despair and compassion, when nearly everyone had lost hope and anticipated the worst, the unexpected happened. Magically, as suddenly out by a sharp knife, all the (creaming and the noise stopped, the whole place enveloped in an agonizing silence. Nobody could grasp it. In a jiffy, the head of the baby made its triumphal appearance and promptly after the entire body glided right into the hands of the midwife. A very easy birth after all. In the first moments, dizzy, a surprised expression on his face, breathing deeply, suddenly, a strong crying filled the room, seemingly the entire universe, a kind of a breastbeating assertion that the new human being made it, in spite of all the adverse circumstances, that life is stronger than everything else. Someone shouted: It's a boy, it's a boy. The noise started again, but now it was jubilant. The word, it's a boy, was repeated and repeated.

It was peculiar. Nobody seemed to really enjoy the event in the customary relaxed manner. More people came into the room and there was only standing space. A woman wiped away the sweat drops still on the face of the mother while

offering her a glass of cold limonade and forcing her to drink, repeating to her in Spanish: "Ya scapo, Sarica, ya scapo ahora, no hay mas" (it is finished by now, there is no more).

The midwife washed the baby carefully, rubbed him with eau de Cologne, spread a strongly perfumed powder on his entire body and wrapped him tightly as it was customary in those times. She put on a beautiful embroidered garment, she laid him on the large bed next to the mother. The baby was under good care. Tired and soothed, he was already asleep.

The picture was grotesque on that wide bed with the thickly woven white linen. The tiny woman in it looked so old and exhausted. She was crying and monotonously repeating: "Una parida sin parido, como puede ser?" (a woman in child bed without a man, how is it possible). Tears streamed down her hollow colorless cheeks. The women around, talking all together, tried to console her. "Mira, el Dio es grande", look, God is great, look at him, "muy hermoso, muy salubre", very pretty, very healthy, take it easy, everything will be alright. But the woman in the bed, did not cease wailing and repeating "Una parida sin parido, por amor del Dio".

This was a house of some prominence with several spacious rooms. The furniture well preserved, sturdy, with elaborate handcarvings all over. On the floors thick handmade carpets. On tables and hanging on walls nice embroidered pieces and all around small souvenirs, handicrafts, crystal glass and silver services into a glassed walnut board, all apparently collected in the course of generations. Everything was neat and very clean. The house had a sturdy wooden gate leading to a large backyard. In the middle of it was a large fig tree and at a corner was a stone walled deep well with a bucket hanging on a sort of a wooden large cylinder. All the surfaces visible, including the walls, were freshly spread with white lime, giving an appearance of neatness and purity, blinkingly reflecting the brilliant spring sun.

At the entrance of the residence there was a spacious covered patio supported by strong wooden beams on which green plants climbed. On all corners of the yard and the patio, and along the walls as well as on window panes, there were clay pots of all sizes with blossoming flowers, jasmine, roses, clove, carnations, mint and other. An eerie rustic appearance when the life of man was less complicated. An invigorating serene spring atmosphere.

This was an important town, Istanbul, Turkey and the year was 1862 or 1863, not sure which. Nobody wrote it down for posterity. May be it was in a file at the Synagogue, but such files did not last long. It was early May and a balmy breeze was gently blowing from the nearby sea of Marmara. On that day



a Shabat, the atmosphere was festive and the narrow streets quiet. No noise from heavily loaded pushcarts rolling on the hard cobblestones, no shouting by pedlars and vendors offering wares and services, no commotion.

All the commotion was now in that house with a hundred of people standing. Some latecomers were outside the gate for lack of space. In the wide backyard, groups of people gesticulating to each other, discussed heatedly and noisily in Spanish, in the peculiar singing manner of the Sefardim, the Mediterranean Jews, often talking all at the same time. There was a constant mobility there, like the waves of turbulent sea, people going from group to group to participate or to put a new argument. Groups formed, deformed and reformed. Some, <sup>people</sup> to make a point, shouted loudly to cover someone else talking. It was very vivid. They spoke so fast that it was amazing how they could communicate so well. Their Castellano dialect was the Spanish of the fifteenth century intact, sporadically peppered with Turkish, French and Hebrew words. A couple of women started moving among the groups offering Turkish coffee in small ornamented cups and various little sweet bakery and pastries.

A particular small group, three men and two women, in their early to late twenties, was standing apart at a corner of the patio deliberating among themselves. A vacuum around them, all the other crowd keeping at a safe distance, ~~from them~~. They were the children of that woman in the child bed, the "parida". They deliberated about the future of their mother and their newborn brother. A rare situation in human affairs.

This was one of the most ancient and prominent families in town since the beginning of the sixteenth century, when the exiled Jews of Spain came harassed here in droves directly or via an other town, mainly Livorno, Italy. Istanbul was the only harbor of safety in the world of the Holy Inquisition and the religious fanaticism. The Ottoman empire, still at its primitive condition, was well on the way of its fabulous expansion. The srewd Sultan Bayazit the second (1447-1512) invited the Jews and publicly gloated "over the folly of the Spanish monarchs who impoverished their own country and enriched Turkey". The newcomers brought very much needed skills and sciences in many fields. Some of them were from the famous University of Salamanca and were well versed in what the country needed most, in medicine and Government. Since then, the gates of Turkey never closed to Jews.

The Sefardim (it means in Hebrew "the Spanish") considered themselves somewhat different from the Ashkenazim (translating "the Germans"), the North European Jews, in social and even religious Weltanschauung, though both follow and apply the same prayers and religious laws. They encountered a very different

destiny throughout their dispersion, nearly never experienced a harsh persecution, massacre, confinement in guettos or restricted areas, the only case of planned extermination being under Hitler Germany *when their lands were occupied*

The family we deal with here was the family Sevilla. The father of it, Pinhas, was a perennial fixture in the Jewish community and a pillar of it in the family tradition. Now at the age of about 63, he was born in the same neighborhood just before the turn of the last century, very probably in ~~1978~~ 1798 or 1799. In the standard of the time, he had a successful life. He married rather late, at age of thirty two, he had five good children and he was well educated. He could write and read Turkish (not everyone around did) and besides knowing well Spanish and Hebrew, he handled also well French. He often sat judging in communal affairs and was the permanent "Gabbai" at the Synagogue, caring for order and ritual and welfare matters, visiting the sick providing for the protection and education of the orphan and above all seeing to it that no family in distress and no stranger went hungry or remained without shelter.

The name Sevilla was a source of particular pride as the names of other authentic Jewish-Spanish family around were, like Toledo, Saragossa, Catalan, Cuenca, Abravanel, Asseo, Calahorra and many other. It connected at best the great nostalgia of the people. The Sefardic Jews still live in Spain spiritually, still speak in that same language as they spoke it when forced to exile in 1492. The country of which they were still dreaming and longing and they were not allowed to put their feet anymore. They still cook the foods their ancestors prepared in Spain, where their so great Rabbis, philosophers, thinkers and poets were buried and where still some of the buildings of their magnificent Synagogues and cemeteries are standing. A piece of Spain is still interwoven in their lives. It is the deep veneration of ancestry and heritage, a deep sense of tradition. When the King of Spain Alphonse the XIII in the early 1920's decreed that Jews may reside in Spain and he offered the Spanish citizenship back to anyone who would somehow show that his ancestors lived in Spain, very few availed. Tired of waiting for over four centuries, they preferred to continue living spiritually <sup>and</sup> in the land of their ancestors. To-day, a handful of Jews live in Spain in a rather restricted religious freedom.

Pinhas Sevilla since early manhood <sup>had</sup> a furniture business. It prospered well up to the time of the savage Crimean war in the 1850's which inflicted a serious setback to the economy of Turkey. On top of that one of the so frequent fires, destroyed the shop entirely.

In those days, a fire in Istanbul was a calamity of the greatest magni-



tude. Always a total disaster and catastrophe and there was no insurance. A lot of hazards in the narrow streets with the precarious buildings pressed the one against the other, all kinds of garbage lying around and as the only material used for everything was wood and in the kitchens and the open primitive cooking contraptions coal was burnt, everything was flammable. To be involved in a fire, it was simply a matter of luck with no preventive possibility.

In some degree people became apathetic and a fire often became a sort of entertainment if you helped fight it or even only watched at it, provided it was not your house, shop or street. With a fire there was confusion to a comic extent. There was no fire department in the city. A lot of people volunteered to fight it by passing to each other buckets of water hand to hand and as often the lines were long, when the buckets reached the fire, they were already half empty. Then other people tried to bring more water on carts drawn by donkeys and mules. This disorganized disarray sometimes lasted for several days until everything has burnt down. People got tired during the day and often they went to sleep during the night leaving the fire alone. Sometimes help came from the divine providence in form of a good rain. If someone's house or shop came more or less unscathed out of a fire, they said, he was lucky, Heavens saved him, the Almighty loved him and sent him rain.

Such a fire put Pinhas out of business and changed the pace of his life. He may have been in a position to have a new workshop and store but, in his late fifties he felt, he should not start again from scratch. As a substitute, he devoted his time and activity to his grandchildren and the Synagogue. On the way of all that, he acquired a heart condition or was it something else? He met with friends, did some philosophizing around and he was always available to the Synagogue and to charity. He was what you could say, a venerable man.

On a Friday afternoon in the Synagogue Pinhas was preparing the Synagogue for the "Kabalat Shabat", the reception of the Shabat, filling the hanging burners with oil people brought in memory of recently dead in their families. In the midst of this pious chore, Pinhas collapsed. The "Shamash" (janitor and maintenance man of the Synagogue) tried to revive him in vain. The man was already dead. This tall mildmannered man with the nice family, had fulfilled the desirable expectations in life, good deeds, respectable and all. Now he had to be buried and sleep in piece. In the Shulhan Aruch, the traditional book of Jewish behaviour, it stands that it is a good deed for children to bury honorably a parent deceased and to remember him with a Kadish prayer while it is a sad obligation for parents when they have to bury a young son or daughter. It was just before the Rosh Hashana and Yom Kipur holidays in September. They buried him in

sorrow. A death is the end of a life, a final end. But this one left something particular behind.

In the following weeks his wife did frequently not feel well. A short frail woman of forty eight or forty nine. Her name was Sare and they called her Sarica. The sudden death of her husband was a hard blow to her. Now, she did not know what was ailing her. Finally she suspected of being pregnant and she was. It seemed to be so absurd and she did not want to believe it. Soon, she had to believe it alright. Just that. A widow, pregnant, the mother of five aged from twenty to thirty, her youngest, Esther, recently married and heavy with child, nine grandchildren. She was dumbfounded. She could not grasp it.

This woman in all her years ~~she~~ led a sheltered life. She took it as a blow, a shame, a calamity coming down from the clear sky and she panicked. She tried everything in her book, very hot baths, eating very salty things and whatever else she knew or heard about. No avail. To whom turn on for advice? To whom tell it? In spite of the prodding and the nagging of her children to go and live in one of their houses, she continued to stay alone in her own big residence. Now she was in an impasse, a street without exit, with no alternative. You could not hide it forever. One day, she summoned her courage and asked her two daughters to come to her. Rachel, married to a well doing merchant of hides had already two children. Esther was expecting her first.

Sarica gave straight the news to them. As flabbergasted ~~they~~ they were, they went promptly to their three brothers and all of them informed their spouses. The latter soon blew it to the fanfare, as the song goes, and so the whole country (Jewish neighborhood) soon knew.

A very unusual situation in a world where secular entertainment was nearly non-existent and the main pastime was gossiping. This case could be a source of jokes, insinuation, needling and malice, but it was not. At the beginning people pretended not knowing and as it became too obvious, they treated it like any other around. The usual wish to a pregnant woman was "happy liberation", implying a wish for an uncomplicated birth. It was just that this woman needed. Physically and mentally she felt it as a constant torture and she withdrew more and more from circulation. Elderly women friends went out of their way offering consolation and her own people treated her with great respect and reverence. Everyone around felt a deep pity for the misfortune of this decaying woman who was considered at fortyeight to be well advanced in years. A pregnancy at that age is always a rarity and an oddity.

In her simple mind, it was inconceivable, incomprehensible, beyond grasp. She felt so guilty and in doubt as to whether she would be able to bear that



child up to the end. She sat alone for hours tormenting herself in anxiety and pain ravaging her and causing much concern to relatives and friends. Would this woman live up to the birth? Everyone felt it was a tragedy and indeed it was, of Greek proportions.

As it often is, the worse things are turning not as bad as they were feared to be. At dawn of that early May day, the big pains came. Estella, the servant, ran for the midwife. Very soon the house filled with anxious relatives and neighbors. There were no maternity hospitals and no obstetricians. All births were effected in homes by midwife with no scientific training. Myself was born in this manner. The older <sup>a</sup> midwife was, the more she was trusted on the fact, her experience was longer. A good midwife, in her old years, enjoyed wide respect in a community.

For long hours there, in increased agony, the unruly crowd, listening to the high pitched screams and moans from the bedroom, wondered how long this woman could keep going. Would the baby survive it? When of a sudden the screams ceased and the agonizing silence spread over the house, people held back their breaths scared, fearing the worst. And when that liberating joyous shout came out into the air: It's a boy, it's a boy, a wave of relief erupted, hysterical laughter and sheer happiness enveloped everything and in crescendo went up to the sky. In the yard and the patio and the house, people embraced each other. It's a boy, it's a boy.

Now, all those people paraded before that large bed looking at the face of the new born, kissing the "parida" and dutifully repeating "que hermoso", how beautiful, chanting the customary wishes, trying to comfort. The woman on the bed looked now exhausted, much older, a wreck, sobbing and murmuring "mejor morir, queria morir", better to die, I wanted to die, "mio povero huerfano", my poor orphan.

The birth of a child is a great event to any family and so is to a Sephardic one. The birth of a Jewish boy is supplemented by an other solemn event in eight days, the "Brith Mila", the circumcision and naming. It can be postponed only for reasons of health. It is especially a great day for the father, but where was the father?

That Sabath morning in the Synagogue, it was quite a celebration and the entire community was there to rejoice <sup>it</sup> ~~the celebration~~. Everyone felt that he was involved. The Mohel, the performer of ritual circumcisions, slapped gently the baby on both cheeks and pinched strongly his leg to listen to his crying as a test of health and he gave him a clean bill. The Godfather, a husky elderly man and a prominent member of the community, sat on a wide chair, the baby on a

white silk pillow resting on his lap. There were all the brothers, the sisters, the uncles and the aunts, the nieces and the nephews, a truly wide family, a strange gathering for a newborn. His eldest brother, Jacob, took the place of the missing father and his sister, Rachel, was in place of his mother.

The "Hazan", the Cantor, chanted the customary prayers and the Mohel proceeded. When the special knife touched the skin, the boy gave a big cry. The whole thing lasted a couple of minutes in the expert hands of the Mohel. He sterilized carefully, put the clamp and bandaged. Finally he poured a couple of wine drops in the baby's mouth. He became dizzy and fell asleep on the spot. They named him Jehuda or Leon because the sign of the tribe of Jehuda was the Lion. Then all went back to that house, to the fragile woman, the tragic "parida", to bring to her the circumcised son.

Everyone was in a festive mood and the May weather was balmy. In the backyards of the houses the plants and the floors blossomed. It was a delight to smell the fragrances in the air. In the backyard of the house, under the fig tree, on the large patio and near the walls, there were long tables laid with many kinds of delicacies, bakery and pastries, bottles of "Ouzo", the sharp liquor with the anise smell and taste and a lot of small glasses around. People became merry and euphoric. Even Sarica, the window of her room open and looking to the yard, was smiling now for the first time since long and talked with those who came at the window. She was whispering to herself: "Qué hermosura", what a beauty, "mio querido huerfano", we will make it. The world was happy that day.

In the midst of all this meriment, again the five brothers and sisters were by themselves at a corner of the patio, deliberating about their mother and the new brother. Jacob the Behor or first born, was the accepted head of the family by now. He said: Everyone will take mother and the baby in his home for six months. Nobody would argue with a "Behor". But this was what they thought. When Jacob went to the bed to tell her what they decided, he met with a stonily face and a flat, categorical no. He tried to convince her, she did not want to listen and it was of no avail. They were greatly annoyed, but nothing doing. They could not force her.

In their eyes it was a serious matter. Estella, the servant, a strong woman widowed in her mid-thirties, received new more accurate instructions, how to be more careful and what to do in a time of emergency. They devised a schedule of visits among them, in a way that someone is there at any time during the day. They were increasingly concerned about the mother and the safety of the baby. She wanted to take care all by herself and declined any interference. A delicate situation. The neighborhood was concerned by now and watched it out.



Pinhas Sevilla was my paternal grandfather and would be to day among the living, his age would be an impossible hundred and eighty. Leon Sevilla was my father and if still lived, he would be hundred and twenty by now. He was a strange man, constantly curious, searching and not finding, dreaming and not acting, a decent shy man who all his life ran scared, more than all the others, absorbing hardship and enduring adversity philosophically. Among all his children, I was perhaps the nearest to him and he loved me very much. I resembled to him at the most in several aspects. Even now, in my old years, I think fondly of my father.

If you grasp a situation, you may understand the implications and the consequences. You will reason, search for solutions, see how to mend to it. If you don't grasp it, you get confused, depressed and you get straight into the pitfall. For Sarica, it was the shock of her life, not possible to explain it and accept to live with. Her only refuge was crying and it does not help in heaven and earth. Help should come primarily from herself, her own strength, but there was no strength left in her. Everyone, close or far, was astonished with what was inflicted upon her and believed that she was the unfortunate victim of an obscure cruel game destiny plays to certain people. Everyone had pity and sympathy for this hapless woman.

As she was sinking deeper, the baby was thriving admirably, getting stronger with every day passing, lively with a rosy complexion and dark blond hair. It was as if nature wanted to compensate with a contrast, discarding the old and strengthening the new life. For hours at a time, she sat still at the window, starring at a fixed point or object, in a vacuum, a total "far niente", doing nothing. Sometimes she dozed there or returned to bed for a <sup>lethargic</sup> nap. What held her consciousness awake, was only the baby and she called him "mio povero huerfano". Estella had to care for both, to the needs of the baby or combing the hair of Sarica, pushing her to eat, watching all her movements. It was heartbreaking. This woman deteriorated by leaps and bounds. Would it not be for the baby, she would probably not get at all out of bed. When the baby cried, she would jump out of bed, like an automaton or at least she tried to. Estella was there and she was faster.

Sarica could not breastfeed the baby and depriving a baby from breastfeeding, was considered harmful and unjust. Nobody could grow to a full physical and mental maturity without "la leche de su madre", the milk of his mother. It was like condemning some one in advance to an inferior development. If someone was of a lower intelligence and made too many mistakes, they used to say, there must have been something wrong with his breastfeeding. The word "leche" in Spa-

nish has various connotations. It can be the most reverent or the most insulting. It depends how you use it, you throw it to someone or connect it. There were around enough mothers of newborn babies with surplus of milk and some were mobilized for Sarica's baby. They did it willingly because it was a "Mitzvah", a commandment and also a "Jehut", a privilege to help preserve life, taking high priority in the Jewish religion. It is an unconditional duty.

There were always people in that house, relatives, friends, neighbors. Sarica most of the time did not notice them because most of the time she was asleep or indifferent when awake. Sometimes, she jumped on her feet, went to the patio, tried to water the plants and took some food. Then, suddenly, she went back to bed to sleep or to her sitting before the window in total inactivity. The stagnation became more and more permanent and the periods of activity rarer and shorter. Alarmingly so.

Her children looked at this situation with increased concern and always tried to talk her into moving away from that melancholy house. She would listen silently, head bent looking at the floor and waiving her head stubbornly negatively. It was a thick wall you couldn't pierce and if the talker would persist, she would explode: "Por amor del Dio", this is the son of "mi querido marido", my beloved husband. She avoided carefully to accept any invitation and she fast became suspicious and even hysterical. She did not trust anyone taking the baby in his arms except Estella and her also not farther than to the backyard.

Matters reached a point of crisis and the family decided to act. Something had to be done. Everyone sensed that Sarica was on the path of insanity and that the very security of the baby was involved. It was now not only the concern of the family, but also of the entire community and neighborhood. The infant boy was alert and healthily growing. The family sent ~~there~~ a doctor to try to convince her and she barely answered to him. Then the doctor ceased to go there because she refused at all to talk to him. Sometimes <sup>she</sup> seemed to be out of her senses, talking incoherently, forgetting what she was saying or doing a moment before and repeating it. Everyone felt that this infant should urgently be brought to a safer place where proper care could be taken of him.

A "Behor", a first born son, especially more with the Sefardic Jews, enjoys of a privilege and has certain obligations. He is the second head of the family and in the case of a deceased father, he takes the place of the "Pater familia", caring for his brothers and sisters up to adulthood and marriage, contributing heavily to the ~~the~~ dowries of the sisters, approving or disapproving of a man proposing to marry one. He has to protect the honor and the wealth of



the family. He often had to abstain marrying himself up to the time that his last sister would get married, which in certain cases caused much hardship. Sometimes, when the first born was a girl, they named her "Behora".

The three brothers and the two sisters were now determined to force a solution. On a saturday afternoon all of them went to the parental house and Jacob alone entered the room of his mother. After a few preliminaries, he started shooting. Look Mamita, it is for your own good and the safety of the "ninio" and the peace of mind of all of us. Her silence encouraged him to continue: Really, we want you to get out of here, the big house, the ghosts and the memories. We will take good care of you and our baby brother. You will say to whose house you want to be. Come to mine, go to anyone else, "veramente" this cannot continue. Now, he was talking fast, pouring out all their agony, trying to say it all as long as she listened, but she did not for long, Mamita, I am sure .....

She cut him angrily. What are you trying to tell me, she asked? Don't I know how to care for my baby. Do you imply, I am neglecting my baby? How did I raise all of you?<sup>2</sup> Any complaints anyone? Turning her head to Estella. Tell him, what do I do wrong? Am I that bad? Without noticing that Estella did not answer, she went on, getting more and more excited, outpouring her very heart in a staccato sequence, repeating herself and there seemed no end to it, as if she was afraid to stop. In a few minutes she talked more than in the whole last year. Jacob stood there petrified, frozen. And tell everyone, I am well capable to look after my home and my baby and if you want to know, I don't need even a servant. I can manage my affairs.

An incredible and absurd spectacle. Jacob did not expect such a vehemence. He thought, this woman is really sick. She looked now so exhausted, so desperate, all her body shaking. What might come next? Jacob could not fade away, not this time with the others waiting at the patio. He waited a little to let her recover. She was there, breathing heavily, tears in her eyes, a fierce expression on her face.

Jacob decided to try harder. Look Mamita, "ya tienes mucho razon", you are so very right, "verdad", you raised us very well and we had the best. This house is not manageable, you are not as healthy as before. Why deny it? Believe me Mamita, for the infant it will be better too. Nobody wants to take the boy from you. Nobody. "Certamente, esta verdadero", you were always the "Malca", the queen in this house. This baby is only yours. He was running out of words. Tell us what you want to take from here. Believe me, everyone will be happy. Estella will be always with you, Please Mamita ....

Suddenly, from the midst of nowhere, she exploded to a deafening, hysterical crying, a wailing shattering the ears and the entire house. Let me alone, let me alone, she shouted. I came here a young flower and now look at me. I want to die in this house. It is my house. I stay here and my son stays with me. By now she was sobbing and screaming uncontrollably, saying incoherent words nobody could distinguish their meaning, a kind of "glossolalia", a speaking in tongues. A puzzle where she found the strength to all that.

The screams pierced the walls and alarmed those who waited at the Patio. They rushed into the room. There she was, sitting on a heavy wooden chair, a wreck of a woman. The baby was awakened and was crying and as Rachel approached to lift him, Sarica shouted menacingly. Let my poor orphan down. Nobody will dare to take him away from me. Back she went to her plaintive wailing and the monotonous glossolalia. Estella took the baby and went out to the patio.

Heartbreaking, terrifying, confusing. Nobody knew how to handle this. The brothers and the sisters went to a corner again to deliberate. They felt beaten and moving mother and baby from there by force, was out of question. So, they decided, an other woman had to be hired and be there day and night, taking over all the chores, cooking, cleaning and the like and leaving Estella free to stay constantly into the bedroom, watching mother and child. Estella was the only person who had the confidence of Sarica to care for the baby.

Sarica cried now silently. It was apparent, she hanged to the baby as to her last hope in life. Jacob approached her again. Mamita, he said, we see, you are right. We understand. It is better you two stay here. You belong here and you will have a good life, with the "ninio". He is so cute, so handsome and you deserve him. We are sure, you will manage alright. He will grow up to be a fine young man. We all love you. He searched for more words while the others watched full of anxiety, sorrow and tearful eyes.

Magically, the picture reversed. She calmed down and for the first time she lifted her head looking at Jacob, eyes <sup>spark</sup> sparkling. She said hastily: Yes, I will make it in this house. She appeared now alleviated, even joyful, some color on her pale face, like someone who just bypassed a grave danger and feels again secure. Everyone felt at this moment that it might be the last spark like with a dying person, feeling euphoric and well for a short while, making plans for a rosy future and suddenly relapsing to the last coma of no return. Now, everyone, was still more concerned about the baby and silently vowed to protect him at every minute.

Right away, next morning, a strong jovial woman in her early fifties,



came in the house. A widow, all her 4 children married, she originated from the Pardo family related to the Sevilias. Her name was Yaffa which means beautiful and she must have been once very much so. Tall, softspoken with an air of authority. She was here a paid person with a mission and responsibility against the entire community. From now on, nobody could enter the main residence without her permission, even the breastfeeding women. Estella became the nurse and everything else was within the jurisdiction of Yaffa. She spent most of her day in the Kitchen and the patio, like a watchdog.

The Fall came. The "ninio" was growing up very well. He was quiet and smiled to everyone coming to him. He was in his fifth month. He became a "cause celebre" under the acute concern of relatives and neighbors. There was a kind of daily information bulletin by word of mouth. By now, Sarica was in bed for most of the time. The Jewish holidays of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur approached. You have to prepare well for these ten days, to pray much and intensely, to be inscribed in the "book of life" in the coming year. But this New Year was awaited with some sorrow too because it was the first anniversary of the death of Pinhas, when the official mourning period for a dead is ended with a particular commemorating service, symbolically separating the dead from the living.

The ritual for the mourning of a dead is elaborate and in those times it was followed very strictly. After a person dies, all his close blood relatives, sit on the floor of the house of the deceased for one week for the "Avel", the mourning. The "sitting" was interrupted only between evening Friday and evening Saturday, the Sabbath. They took even their meals and slept on mattresses on the floor. Neighbor or distant relative women, took over the cooking, the care of children and the house chores. Every morning and evening during the "Avel", a Rabbi or a learned person came, in the presence of a "Minyan", ten adult persons, for prayers and the "Kadish", the standard prayer.

Aside of reciting the "Kadish" at the Synagogue by the male relatives of the dead every Saturday and the Jewish holidays during the first year, once every week for the first month and once a month for the first year, there is a gathering of a "Minyan" at the house of the deceased for prayers. Then it is the same once a year. As the secular and Hebrews calendars differ, the Rabbis of small congregations used to keep track of such anniversaries and remind the pertaining family about the exact days of events.

The need of a "minyan" in houses in the Jewish neighborhood was frequent. Sometimes some of the same males went to more than one "Minyan" in the same evening. In case not enough males to form a "Minyan", including the relatives, were

available, you could mobilize some poor elderly men in the neighborhood, eager to come and have then some cookies, a ~~few~~ cup of coffee, some money discreetly put into the palm of their hand and, in some hard cases, an evening meal. For some oldsters it became a kind of entertainment and profession. So there was not for a lack of a "Minyan" to miss a house anniversary.

It was like that. In the biggest room about twenty chairs to sit people. The commemorative prayers chanted. After the end, women will enter the room offering Turkish coffee, brandy in small cups and pastries. The men socialized and chatted amiably for half or one hour and discussed all kinds of topics. The gatherings lasted more in summer than in winter, depending on the weather. It was hazardous walking in the narrow unlighted streets because of the holes on them or invisible objects outside the houses.

Being the first annual anniversary for Pinhas' death, it had to be very solemn. The family wanted to organize it properly. But man proposes and God disposes. The ceremony never took place. Something bigger occurred to supersede it.

Three days before "Rosh Hashana" the New Year, in one of her rare lucid intervals, Sarica said, she wanted to bake the pastries and the sweets as she did every previous year. Bake for whom? Every household would bake enough for their own family, usually a numerous one. Though a strange and absurd request for this sick woman, Jacob sent to her all the needed materials, olive oil, flour, sugar, honey almonds, eggs, the sharp goat milk cheeses, spinach, ground beef and the like. Yaffa and Esther, the youngest daughter of Sarica, were there to help. Esther had her first child, a boy, last month.

Early afternoon, as the stone oven was prepared in the backyard for the baking, suddenly Sarica fainted and Estella ran for the Doctor. Yaffa and Esther brought the woman in the bedroom. Soon the doctor came, went into the room and locked the door, while Estella went to the patio carrying the baby. The Doctor examined the unconscious woman but he could not diagnose. Was it the heart, the kidneys, the lungs or may be the belly? He worked hard and she remained lifeless. He tried desperately to bring her to consciousness, putting salts under her nose, rubbing her with alcohol, pouring drops into her mouth, but to no avail. She was there, breathing once heavily and then very faintly, in a comatose condition.

Very fast, the backyard and the patio was overfilled with people and there were all Sarica's children. The bedroom was always locked with Yaffa, Esther and the doctor inside, no sound coming out of there. The Doctor kept trying to put some medicine into her mouth, but she would not swallow. Jacob outside became highly impatient and knocked strongly at the door, but nobody



answered. He became impatient and he continued to <sup>knock</sup> knock in every little while. Just then, the door opened and he saw how Esther was helping the doctor put his coat, a husky short man with a sad face. Jacob asked "como esta Mama"? The doctor looked absentmindedly at Jacob, then at the silently crowd over his shoulder and he said, "se mourio", she died. He put his hat on, took his worn out leather medical bag without answering any other questions, proceeded through the backyard while people respectfully made way for him and out to the street he went.

"Se mourio"? What does it mean? Was <sup>it</sup> as simple as that? It was the end of the world. And what about that twice orphaned boy at the venerable age of five months? Now he was a real "huerfano". People all around wept. The circle of the tragedy was closed. The doctor may have not found out of which ailment she had died, but everyone else knew about it. My grandmother died hundred fifteen years ago. Such a long time.

As the Greeks said, "in every bad thing there is something good coming out", so it was here. The baby was the only unaffected around. "El ninio" the kid, was sent immediately to Jacob's house in the tender arms of his wife Mazaltov, accompanied by Estella. An other conference took place on the spot among the brothers. Jacob decreed, he will keep the boy for one year in his house and then he will stay for one year in each brother's house. At that moment nobody knew that the "ninio" would be at Jacob's home for the next twenty years or so.

The wailing for the dead woman engulfed the house and women took over the body to treat it as it behooves, wash it, trim the hair, cut the nails etc. It was done for no reward. It was a Mitzvah, a good deed. When done, they wrapped the body into a large white linen sheet. Then the body was laid down on the floor in the middle of the room, a very tall candle burning at the head <sup>(one at)</sup> and the feet. All the furniture was out of the room which was now filled with chairs for the night <sup>wake</sup> ~~vigil~~ people to sit.

As soon as a person died, indifferently of age or station in life, the immediate family must abstain from any endeavour for the deceased or even touch the dead. It is a note of compassion. The living are supposed having greatly endured ~~the~~ red hardship during the illness and they cannot do anymore than adding distress and pain to themselves. The details of burial are left to the care of the "Hevrah Kedosha", the particular committee at the Synagogue for funerals, securing a grave plot at the Jewish cemetery and the like. Care was taken indifferently to the financial condition of the family and even the poorest was buried with great dignity. The committee people work coolly and diligently alleviating the sorrow and the suffering of the bereaved family. The members were mainly prestigious middleaged men.

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main department stores in Istanbul. The other of the adult Sevilla brothers was Aaron, newly married, at that time with an infant son named Nathan, whom we will meet again later. Aaron was a taylor and the intellectual in the family, reading books, knowing languages and eager to debate with anyone and on any subject under the sun.

The death anniversaries of Pinhas and Sarica were both in the fall, only a few days apart. For decades to come, a ceremony was held at the parental house, now the house of Yohanan Sevilla, a ceremony for both of them. It was an annual opportunity for the large growing family to gather ~~together~~ to say the remembrance prayers and sit together for a few hours. It became an annual event from which nobody was missing.

Out of these tragic events, the infant Leon came out strongly as a symbol of the eternal renewal of life. He came more than any other, out of nowhere, like a meteor from distant skies. As a young man he disappeared likewise from the eyes of that community. He came into the lives of those simple people, uninvited, undreamed like falling on their lap at an unwatched moment. As soon as he stood on his feet, he left without even saying goodbye to anyone. Then, he became a legend in that community, a myth, an indelible memory, effaced from the minds of those only by the length of time. Then he had a long, tortuous, confused life, full of dreams and much inaction. And when this man departed this world in mature age, it is doubtful as to whether he had ever a real glimpse of the meaning of that all. But do so all of us? What he was, for sure, <sup>(sk)</sup> is that he was a good man.

### THE GROWING OF THE SAPLING

Such a sequence of tragic events make history within a family and cause an increased sympathy in the community. What was unusual in this case, ~~it~~ was that these events affected nearly equally deeply all of the community, the small Jewish community in Galata, Istanbul. Simple people living in a simple ~~era~~ in one of the biggest towns ~~at~~ that time, pious though rather liberally religious, each family acquainted more or less intimately with the other. There were no antisemitic laws, regulations or restrictions imposed. The social relationship between the minorities was regulated by the minorities themselves and not by the Government. Each minority lived in a certain neighborhood ~~by~~ choice and not as in a ghetto. The Government wanted only peace among the minorities, and there was peace.

The community was bereaved as much as the family Sevilla was, but time, as always, is the gradual healer. Its recuperative dust sprays on scar ~~and~~ soul and soul. The "kid" the "ninio" as all called him in all the years, went ahead under the eyes of everyone, every day, every month, growing up well. He remained all the time for the community the paradox, a part of their universe, the boy of everyone and everyone spoiled him with his particular attention. People need a scapegoat to attribute their adversities and an idol to put on their hopes, wishful thinking, ~~dreams~~, aspirations. Leon remained a sensation there, up to the end and beyond it. As years ~~passed~~, <sup>he grew up</sup> to a handsome dark blond and tall boy, obedient and with ~~mild manners~~. Everyone went out of his way for him and the teachers took good care of him.

The history of the Jews in Turkey runs somewhat parallel to the history of Turkey itself. In Istanbul, the Constantinople of the Byzantines, Jews existed since very early, presumably the 4th century when the eastern part of the Roman empire was established. Under the very oppressive Byzantine rule, the Jews could never achieve anything and all along those many centuries, they were held at the lowest social level and lived despised and miserably. When the Turks conquered and dissolved the Byzantine nation in 1453, the fate of the Jews was dramatically reversed. Mohamed the II (1430-1481) proved to be one of the most enlightened rulers ever in Moslem history. One of his first acts was to appoint Rabbi Moses Capsali the head of all Jews in the Turkish empire and gave him a seat next to the "Mufti", the highest Moslem religious head. His successor, Sultan Bayazid the II (1481-1512), gave a welcome refuge to the multitudes of the Spanish Jews in Turkey. Then, the next Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566) enabled the Sephardim, the Spanish Jews, to consolidate and flourish in his country.



The Turks traditionally kept closely and exclusively the Government and the military arts, in which they excelled and they left commerce, industry and related occupations to the minorities. Farming remaining the main occupation of the Turkish masses. As the conquests added astounding might to the empire and it became for long the main military power in a greatly divided world, the position of the Jews as well as their spiritual and intellectual life, were greatly strengthened. When the Turkish empire declined, also the condition of the Jews weakened. In the nineteenth century, Istanbul was the most important town in the Mediterranean area, the center of the greatest activity.

Among the minorities, the Jews were most favored because, for the Mohame-dans were the respected "People of the Book". Since the establishment of the Mos-lem religion at the beginning of the 7th century, the Jews were always tolerated and never subjected to religious hatred, a restricted life under discriminating regulations and edicts as it was the case constantly in almost all the Christian countries. Generally, under the benevolent eye and rule of the Government, every-body could live and prosper in Turkey and everyone was at liberty to practice and administer his religion.

In the 19th century, under the dynasty of the Osman Sultans, the Osman-lis, life in Istanbul was good and many of the ancient Jewish families were well entrenched in the economic activity and were well organized. If there was any trace of antisemitism in the country, it was not with the Turks. No Turkish child-ren were harassing Jewish children that they crucified anyone and no slandering pamphlets were circulated against them.

The "ninio" was liked and loved by everyone and it was as if the entire community had adopted him, a special boy. He belonged to all equally. To his own family and to this neighborhood, he was like the biblical Benjamin, the beloved youngest though, paradoxically, he had nephews who were older than he or around his own age, in all about a dozen of them and they were still coming. Everyone smiled at him and spoiled him.

After the passing of his first year at the house of his oldest brother Jacob, Leon continued to live there happily. ~~He became very attached to the mature and strong man Jacob was, his thirty years older brother who took the place of the real father. A tight psychic bond developed between the two. Jacob loved that little boy very dearly and the latter revered him very much. In all life, it is the natural urge for someone weak to lean on someone strong for security and the strong has the need to protect a weak being as a way of asserting his strength. It appeared that these two made a perfect match. Jacob taught the boy all things that were to be learned, he was the proudest about his~~ He became very attached to the mature and strong man Jacob was, his thirty years older brother who took the place of the real father. A tight psychic bond developed between the two. Jacob loved that little boy very dearly and the latter revered him very much. In all life, it is the natural urge for someone weak to lean on someone strong for security and the strong has the need to protect a weak being as a way of asserting his strength. It appeared that these two made a perfect match. Jacob taught the boy all things that were to be learned, he was the proudest about his

achievements and, together with his own children, he took the "ninio" regularly to the Synagogue and always put him to sit next to him.

As the boy started to be aware of the surrounding world, there was the matter of how he should address all his many brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts and other relatives, all older by twenty ~~five~~ <sup>fifty</sup> to ~~thirty~~ years. In those times of the young paying great respect towards ~~everyone~~ older, it was rather inconceivable to call them simply by name, as it would be done to-day. On the other hand friends, business partners and even slightly acquainted people, called each other "hermano or hermana", brother or sister which implicates simply closeness. But the boy went ahead calling his brothers "hermano" and his sisters "hermana", his uncles and aunts <sup>for</sup> what they were to him, uncle and aunt. It was the best. Everyone around continued calling the boy "ninio". Only Jacob called him "Leonchico", Little Leon.

And the years passed by. The older became more old and prosperous while "el Ninio" reached his thirteenth year, the time for Bar Mitzvah, the beginning of adulthood and responsibility, when a male may be a part of a "Minyan", to be one of the ten males needed to participate in a collective prayer. It always was and still to-day is a great ~~family~~ day for a family and for the boy who is prepared for several months before. One of the most solemn events in the life of a Jew

In those times the education of the young was ~~on a~~ very primitive ~~level~~ and the majority of the masses remained formally illiterate. The only thing that saved people from total ignorance was the more or less compulsory learning of Hebrew and the reading of the "Tora", the Ancient Testament and other Jewish writings related to it. The education ended there for most. To acquire any education beyond that, meant private teachers and having the means to pay for it. The number of professionals was very limited, as was the need of the community for them. To get taught in anything <sup>more</sup> than that, you had to go abroad, to Italy or France.

At his Bar Mitzvah time, Leon handled ~~well~~ Spanish, French and Turkish fluently and he could write and read in those languages which was in itself a higher level of education. Hebrew was for the Sefardim the "Lasson Hacodesh", the holy language, only to pray and not to discuss in it, presumably up to the ~~time~~ <sup>time</sup> there would be again a free State of Israel. But you had to know Hebrew to understand the complexities of the Jewish writings. They used to write Spanish in Hebrew letters to make it ununderstandable by any Gentile. The original Turkish Alphabet was extremely complicated and ~~even~~ <sup>only</sup> a minority of the Turkish population knew how to write in it. In this century with scientific advances in all aspects, it became such a problem that one of the main reforms of Kemal Ataturk in 1928,



was to abolish it and adopt the latin Alphabet, enabling millions of his own people of all ages, often by compulsive measures, to get familiarized in reading and writing their language. He in virtually eradicated illiteracy in Turkey.

This was the most glorious Bar Mitzvah celebration ever in the annals of the Jewish community of Galata in Istanbul. That May day of 1875 or 1876, the Synagogue was overfilled with people. It was a very festive Sabbath. The Bar Mitzvah boy had to be the last of the usual seven adults who are called one by one to read a portion from the open scroll of the "Tora". The youth, after reading his part, he had to read also the regular supplement called "Aftara". Then he would ~~leave the~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~pulpit, and~~, as he passed, people greeted him with "Hazak Barouch", be strongly blessed. He would go to all his male relatives sitting there, starting with his father and kissing his hand. Every relative, would put the open palm of his hand on the head of the boy and pronounce the blessing: "Yivareheha Heloim Vayismereha", The Almighty will bless you and watch upon you".

There was again a delicate problem for the "ninio". People were curious to see how it would be done. Nobody kisses the hands of brothers. ~~or of any other~~ ~~except his parents' hands~~. But the boy did again the right thing. He went straight to where Jacob was sitting, bent his head gracefully and kissed his right hand. The man, overwhelmed, tears in his eyes, embraced and kissed the boy on both cheeks. Then he paraded before all his brothers, uncles and teachers, kissing their hands, each one putting his open hand on the boy's head and blessing him and everyone kissing him on both cheeks. It was a highly emotional moment for the whole congregation. Unforgettable.

At the end of the service, Leon went to the separate women section to kiss the hands of his sisters and assorted aunts and old ladies. Here too, he received more kissing than he gave. His Bar Mitzvah day ~~is longer of in the~~ ~~now of memory~~ remained ~~so~~ indelibly in the mind of Leon. He liked to remember it up to the end of his days.

Every Bar Mitzvah, ~~also~~ <sup>even in</sup> a poor family, was continued with a reception at the home, immediately following the ceremony <sup>in</sup> at the Synagogue. Delicacies and local liquor or Turkish coffee were offered. Now, everyone went at the home of Jacob. In the wide backyard <sup>Under the green canopies</sup> there were long tables loaded with many kinds of bakery, pastries, various delicacies, wine and local liquors. The entire community paraded wellwishing, eating, drinking and becoming merry. It was ~~like~~ a day of brotherhood. The usual animosities, jealousies, likes and dislikes, enmities in a densely inhabited neighborhood, were forgotten. The vote for Leon was unanimous. He was the boy of everyone and affectionately so.

One week after the Bar Mitzvah, the brothers with their mates, gathered at Jacob's residence to deliberate about the future of the "ninio". Boys usually at the age of eleven to twelve were put in apprenticeship to learn a trade and this period of learning lasted several years. He was paid very little, the discipline was harsh and he had to perform the lowest chores without protest. If there was a paternal business and he was the "Behor" or there was a place for him in a family business, at the latest promptly after his Bar Mitzvah, he had to join for apprenticing. No youth could run around idle. To remain an unskilled adult was considered very bad, something wrong with the boy, mainly mentally.

The same difference existed with Leon as always. He belonged not to one particular family, he belonged to the five of his brothers and sisters. So they had to decide what was the way for him, ~~to take~~ Jacob argued, why not furniture? Did I not apprentice at our father's and now, look at me. Indeed, he was prospering nicely. He was the supplier of the Sultan's palace and of some other high dignitaries, Pashas, Beys and other. Brother Aaron, the Taylor, said: Give me the boy, a clean trade, I will make an artist out of him. Brother Yohanan insisted, the most promising place in the world for the boy was to take him in his newly established department store. And so went on. An uncle with a fishing equipment business wanted to make him an expert in it, the husband of sister Rachel wanted the boy in his prospering business of cattle hides, someone else in his lumbyard and again an other in his grocery store and no end to it.

Then they had the idea to call Leon and ask him what apprenticeship he liked to have, ~~for the next six or eight years~~. It confused him greatly and he could not decide. It confused also greatly everyone there, and they took the easiest and worst decision. As they reached an impass, someone said, look, why force matters? Let the boy apprentice with one of us for six months and if he likes the trade, he will stick with it. If not, then he can always chose an other among ours. It was the perfect escape. To postpone the issue was as simple as the famous egg of Columbus. You prove a point but you lose the egg and it was just that.

The first apprenticeship, as everything first, was at Jacob's furniture business. As I said, an apprentice was in fact a servant-slave under the heels of every adult in a business. Who would and could discipline the brother of the boss, the special boy Leon was in the neighborhood with the unheard option to see if he likes it and jump to something else? Not even Jacob himself. Besides, he was mostly out, to buy material, to receive orders, to deliver personally furniture, to discuss and negotiate with high placed customers. The result was that Leon was more playing around than learning anything positive about the trade. No wonder. He felt anyway superior, better education, spoiled and all.



After four months he was on ~~the way of~~ his second apprenticeship at his other brother's Aaron tailor shop. Not that he had chosen it, but only because it was the nearest one. The only thing he had learned during his first apprenticeship was that furniture is made of wood. Now he was learning that clothing was made of fabrics, which was a new discovery. Aaron was the one in the family who read books, many of them and the one who was daydreaming the most. Leon was ~~still~~ nearer to his heart because he too liked to read and he was more educated than most of the other youths around. Aaron liked to debate and Leon was ~~more~~ patient to listen to him. The problem was that the "ninio" soon discovered that tailoring is not for him, ~~and that he should look around for another vocation.~~ Aaron let him go with great disappointment.

Next came the business with the fishing equipment of uncle Vital. A jovial corpulent <sup>and when</sup> man of fifty five, constantly joking to a point you never knew when he was kidding ~~and~~ speaking seriously. He was the younger brother of Leon's mother Sarica. He had a roomy shop at the shore selling ~~fishing~~ nets, pieces of cork, rods and ~~many~~ other fishing accessories. A good business. He had workers making and repairing huge nets. Fishermen ~~failed~~ <sup>pulling</sup> out to the sea every evening to throw the nets at various places and early in the morning dozen of them labored hard to draw the ~~nets~~ back to the shore, full of fish. They stood there in several vertical lines on the sand, rythmically ~~drawing~~ <sup>pulling</sup> the ropes to which the nets were attached. The head man of each line gave the signal for each draw. Then the men advanced a couple of steps forward to catch again the ropes and started anew to pull. This lasted often for hours, depending on what load was in the nets, how far they were thrown, if the sea was turbulent or quiet and so on. When the labor finished, the fish catch was selected and separated, people came to buy, others put fish on flat baskets which then were put on the head of a man who went like that to distant neighborhoods to sell the fish.

The "ninio" liked the movement, the fresh air at the sea and he might have stayed there if he would not be so restless or if there would be someone able to hold him ~~there~~. Three years passed since his first apprenticeship and he had not yet definitively chosen what will his vocation be. He went from business to business for a few months and then to an other. It became like a play, a habit. It was fun for "ninio" and a source of chronic remorse and guilt for the entire family, even for the whole neighborhood. It was a unic and strange phenomenon that a youth could have six or eight apprenticeships within three years without taking roots at anyone of them. As the apprenticeships were exhausted, he was now back at Jacob's furniture ~~shop~~ to discover again that furniture is made of wood. It was just at that time that the family gathered to deliberate once again what to do about it.

This time the discussion was very ~~any~~ animated. Every one was angry with the other for not having exercised the proper discipline on the "ninio" to keep him down on a trade. ~~the~~ Now, at sixteen, <sup>he</sup> should already master one like all the young boys of sixteen in the world. It was ridiculous. The entire community was disappointed with them and deplored the apparent harm done to the future of the beloved boy. The discussion went more vehemently the way all the other made before on the same subject. Proposals were made and rejected, arguments put forward and refuted, solutions elaborated and not accepted by all. As always, the same blind alley developed. No way out in sight. Again time was wasted in words and opinions repeated. When the debate became so heated that it could not go on, someone proposed to go home, assemble again next week to have time to think it over. It was the easiest usual way out, an other escape from reality.

As it often happens, the most complicated <sup>situations,</sup> ~~solutions,~~ the most difficult problems, have the simplest solutions, only that someone thinks hard enough and finds one. In the gathering, at a corner, sat a nobly looking white haired man in his ~~late~~ fifties, listening silently ~~to~~ the heated arguments ~~exchanged~~. He was an older brother of Mazaltov, Jacob's wife. His name was Yahiel Pardo. He was a sort of rarity in this family because he did not have his ~~own~~ <sup>own</sup> business or enterprise. His ~~story~~ life story ran like this: In the 1840's a big department store in Paris, France, established a branch store in Istanbul, the first of the kind, to cater primarily to the fashion desires of the diplomat wives and some other foreign or minority well to do ladies. It was the era in which Turkey started getting opened to the Western habits and mores, and Istanbul was all of Turkey in this. This town was the greatest center of commerce in the Mediterranean at that time, wealthy and prosperous. Though Turkish women did not circulate anywhere outside of homes and residences, the "hanoums", the ladies, especially those kept into the "harems" of the wealthy and powerful dignitaries, needed cosmetics and fine garments. The French branch store became a success overnight.

As a teenager, Yahiel was mobilized to work there, mainly because of his good knowledge of French and his neat appearance, he fitted well in such a prominent and exclusive place. One of the innovations of the French was to introduce rain umbrellas and parasols for the first time. They were imported from Paris. Soon business flourished and, especially the sun parasols, became very fashionable in Istanbul. With this, the need for repair and spare parts arose.

Yahiel Pardo was sent to Paris to learn all what was to it with umbrellas. After one year he returned with all the knowledge, the tools and an adequate supply of spare parts and satin fabrics to organize the production and service workshop. It became the sole supplier in the whole country for many years to come.



Since then, for about thirty years, Yahiel headed that workshop and he remained the main authority on umbrellas in Turkey. Well paid, happily married, his three children in successful positions, he led a content life with his wife Miriam. One of his sons had already a high position in the same department store. Yahiel wanted one of his two <sup>other</sup> sons to succeed him in the umbrellas workshop, but they took other directions.

Now, as things were at an impass in that gathering and they were to disperse, Yahiel asked everyone to sit down for a moment and listen. He told them in a brief manner, no use trying with other apprenticeships for the boy. If they do so, in an other three years they would be sitting at the same place with the same problem exactly, repeating the same arguments. The "ninio" will be drifting from place to place until the world would have enough of him and would end to be a bum. Nobody wanted that. Do you know what is the problem, he asked them? We should ~~not~~ send him to an apprenticeship outside the family and make him stick to it from the beginning. We should keep the decision about what was fitting <sup>and</sup> not <sup>for</sup> that kid. It is high noon and let's see if we can save the day.

He went on? Why not umbrellas? Why not apprenticing and taking over the workshop? He is neat and trim and intelligent and he knows French and I can make him. A clean work, a civilized place, a secure and well paid position, many holidays the shop closed. And if Leon in later years decides to establish his own umbrellas factory, what is better than that? He, Yahiel, repented not having done it out of loyalty to the shop, but with Leon is different. You know, with people becoming more sophisticated nowadays, such a production will be the best industry in this country. And as everyone knows, each year it rains in Istanbul. A sure thing, a monopoly.

All were alleviated to know that each year it rains in Istanbul. They felt their heated blood pressure coming down. The idea was a real hit, a real relief and how come nobody thought about it before? Yahiel was instantaneously persuasive. Out with the perennial uncertainty, jumping from apprenticeship to irresponsibility, from vacuum to vacuum. All agreed that Yahiel would handle this. They called the "ninio" in. He was not asked about the new apprenticeship. Yahiel told him, it was decided so.

So Leon became an umbrella maker and he remained so for life, his only vocation. It is not more complicated than tailoring or shoemaking, as myself know when I helped my father in a few of my young years in this trade, when it was pouring from the skies and people waited on line to have their broken umbrellas fixed. You have not to be a genius to work on umbrellas. I confess, I did not like this

trade too much. May be, it had molded the course of his life. Who knows? If he would become a furniture maker or a fishing equipment specialist, his life would be shaped differently, may be. One is for sure. He retained always the attitude of his young apprenticeship years in thought and deed. The only thing he stuck to, was the umbrella making. He did so not because he was in love with the trade, but because life kept him nailed to it.

Yahiel Pardo had spoken wisely and as the years rolled by, it was proved that the position in that department store and the umbrellas was the right thing for Leon. Now, in his late teens, handsome, tall and polite, well liked by poor and rich, dark blond complexion, an agreeable personality. At work he was thriving under the benevolent eye of his uncle Yahiel and in the home of Jacob and Mazaltov, where he still lived, under their particular care. They had four children of their own, three of whom were older than their uncle Leon. For everyone in that house, he was always the "Leonchico", the special young man.

There was not much recreation in those times for young people aside of the Synagogue. Only rather rare holiday gatherings, occasional visits, some weddings, Bar Mitzvahs and the like where the young had to behave by being inactive. Family picknics/ outings were also rare, but the young boys found their fun often out of their neighborhood, in beaches and in the country.

Istanbul in those days was a remarkable town with a very colorful life, the main place for everything in the empire. There was a continual stream of people from the far and near provinces. It was the seat of everything, military, civil administration, learning, judiciary, commerce, religion and what have you. And there was the all powerful Sultan with his Vezirs, Pashas and all the other high dignitaries who abolished and made laws in a glance of the eye, issued "Fetfas", regulations even on individual cases and often sending them to province local authorities in the hand of the citizens concerned.

The system worked and there was nearly no friction whatsoever among the various races and faiths in this town. The three main religions were there in harmony and tolerance. Each lived in a particular neighborhood in a compact manner, though people circulated and did business everywhere, avoiding to disturb the social and religious pattern of each other.

Friday was the day of rest for the Moslems, saturday was for the Jews and on sunday it was for the Christians and everyone was careful not to disturb the seventh day of the other. On saturday, all activity ceased in the Jewish neighborhood, on friday you heard the melodic monotonous invitation for prayer from the Mosques in the Turkish streets repeating the traditional "Allahu Akbar", God is



Great" and from the Greek areas on Sunday came the multiple sound of the many Church bells all over town. ~~And~~ there were the many religious holidays during which no business was conducted. So, nearly at all times, in some part of this town people were celebrating for something and life stood still.

The chronology, the way of measuring time, was a peculiar and confusing general problem. Calendar was the headache of mankind since very ancient times. Calendars were established and then changed as inaccurate. The Greek and Roman measurements of time were approximate. The Jewish calendar is supposed to be based on the Genesis, some 5737 years, a rather complicated system on the moon cycle with 12 months of alternatively 29 and 30 days each. Roughly in every three years (in fact seven times in every nineteen years) there is a thirteenth month in the spring called "Adar Bet", before the month of Nissan when the Passover is celebrated. This makes all the Jewish holidays to be movable against the Christian calendar, except for Easter, also based on the moon cycle.

The Moslems follow the same calendar they inherited from the Jews. Their chronology starts on 622, the year Mohamed went to conquer the town of Mecca, starting his baffling decade of activity (he died on 632 C.E.) from which the third big religion of our times sprung up. Thus, this year of 1977, is the year 1355 for the Moslems.

The explaining of the prevailing calendars is essential to understand the general life in such a town. In short, the Romans did something about it. Julius Ceasar in 46 B.C. adjusted the calendar in a comprehensive and more precise manner as we know it to day. It is known as the "Julian Calendar". Later, in 1582, Pope Gregory the XIII, added thirteen days to above in adjustment of the difference beyond the 365 - 366 yearly days cycle. It became known as the "Gregorian" Calendar. It was accepted by all Christians except the Orthodox, who stuck to the "Julian". Thus there were two different Christian calendars as ~~the~~ the masses of the Eastern Orthodox Faith measured time and events by thirteen days differently.

The confusion was great in a town where the main faiths lived in such a proximity and often did business with each other. In correspondence among Christians, you had to use the two dates, that is March 12/25. If a contract was made affecting Jews, Christians and registered locally, it had to bear four different dates to define the exact date of the document. The same holidays were celebrated in two different dates thirteen days apart, depending from being a catholic or an Eastern Orthodox Christian. This situation lasted for centuries as Orthodox nations one after the other adopted the corrected "Gregorian" calendar. The last was Greece doing so in 1923. To day there are still some Eastern Orthodox people sticking to the "Julian

Though the various minorities of different religious faiths lived without serious friction in that town, socially they related mainly to their own people. Young people still unmarried, had two pastimes, swimming in the many beaches around and frequenting the "Karagioz", the shadow theater, nationally Turkish and spread for centuries in all the countries occupied by Turkey. With time it was brought to artistic heights and became the only recreation for the masses of all Faiths and social classes.

Since starting apprenticeships, Leon had a number of friends around his age, some of them from among his nephews and others belonging to the best families in the Jewish community. For years they were together, especially where it was recreation. Istanbul was the most vivid town and harbor of that time, the link to two continents, moderate climate, wonderful beaches, islands of great serenity and beauty dispersed around. Even since ancient times it was the meeting point of races and religions, the crossroads of travel and commerce, for long periods of time the seat of wealth, power, intrigue and Government. The straights of the Dardanelles connect the Mediterranean with the Black sea and who reigns on them, can easily cut also the connection.

Leon and his friends went to the beaches at any time the weather was warm enough for swimming and they went all the time to the "Karagioz" shadow theater. The main hero was Karagioz in every play. The name translates in Turkish as "Black Eye". He is always srewd, a smart aleck and always the winner of the girl or the money or whatever is at stake. He manipulates everyone around, even the Vezir, the prime minister. He is surrounded by many other characters, but he is always the leading figure. It works like that:

Each character is painted or sketched on a piece of paper which is glued on a piece of strong carton cut to shape. The body parts are movable, hands, feet, head ~~and~~ are attached by thread to form the body. On the back of each figure a thin wooden rod is nailed to make manipulation by hand possible. The size of the figures <sup>varies</sup> ~~varies~~ according to the size of the screen, something between eight to twelve inches. Each figure was in vivid colors and exactly the same in all the plays. Karagioz is short and very ugly with an enormous head and hunchback, telling jokes, sparkling humor, very greedy, always scheming, inventing and finding solutions to happy ends. Aside of people figures, they used all kinds of props, the palace of the Sultan, a garden, a river and the like, all made out of painted carton pieces.

It was simple. A piece of white thin canvas was stretched tightly between two standing wooden poles and behind it several candles were burning while the audience sat in the unlighted space in the front. The manipulator in the rear part of the screen put vertically the shadow figures on the canvas making them perfectly



visible at the other side of the audience. The performer did the work on all the figures, holding the dialog, changing voices as to speak for every figure, he sang and sometimes played even the tune and made all the noises by himself. He moved the figures, changed them, put the props as trees, horses, dogs and other and changed surroundings and landscapes.

There were <sup>shorter</sup> ~~smaller~~ and <sup>longer</sup> ~~bigger~~, simpler or better "Karagioz" performances. It was an art as any other theatrical. The performer needed considerable skills and memory and a lot of talent to deliver a good play. In smaller places he performed alone doing everything, but in more elaborate presentations, there was a singer or a group of same and supporting musicians playing the local stringed instruments, the "oot", the laoot" or the bouzook". The range of classic plays was unending, ~~and performed only by memory~~. New plays were continually added to the repertoire. In certain cases there was a second performer assisting the main one.

The Karagioz theater was a passionately liked art, levelling social classes and uniting the people. Some of the performers became famous and rich for the ability to improvise. It was like an addiction. A performance lasted an average of three to five hours. The always numerous audience sat on the bare floor munching noisily sunflower or watermelon salted baked seeds, living intensely the romantic story on the illuminated canvas, listening to the songs and music pouring out of there, laughing with the jokes and shrewdness of Karagioz.

Leon and his friends went at least once weekly to the "Karagioz" which was more a theater in the winter, and they enjoyed it. It kept young people out of mischief and it was also educational as any theater can be. Solutions were found to all ailments and problems. There was philosophy, advice and humor. It was pure folklore out of folkflore. Karagioz anecdotes, sayings, expressions survived and became a house word, songs became popular. It filled a need.

The restless gang of Leon and his friends needed more fun than that. All of them belonging to opulent families with more free time in their hands and less problems. As an outlet for piling insecurity, as a kind of an exhaust valve, they did all kinds of pranks outside the Jewish neighborhood. They felt creating something of their own. Leon was a typical case. It was a cry for help, for discipline.

Some of the pranks were crude, cruel and demonstrated how these youths were immature. Fruit vendors exhibited fruit and vegetables on the narrow pavement outside their shop, on those narrow streets on precarious shaky wooden stands leaning on the wall. One of the gang would sneak there pretending to purchase something while an other would bend and bind a thin strong string to the crates with the produce. Then back to a distance they pulled the string. The unfortunate ven-

dor, to his great dismay, saw his crates travelling to the middle of the dirt street, overturned, tomatoes, vegetables, grapes and all spread around while the boys at the ~~street~~ corner were laughing hysterically and the mostly elderly man loudly swearing at them, tried desperately to save something from the dispersed produce.

Some pranks were worse than that like the one with the julep vendor. Hot thick julep with cinamon spread on it, was a very welcome warming beverage in cold days. Vendors with a big oval shaped copper contraption on their backs strapped, full of hot julep, went around offering it. Underneath the copper sheet recipient, was one small tin box attached with burning coal to keep the julep hot. There was space at the front on his belly for a <sup>piece</sup> ~~place~~ attached to his belt holding three or four usual wine glasses, in which the julep was offered. Hanging on his side was ~~hanging~~ a small water recipient. When a customer finished his julep, the man poured some water into the glass to wash it and filled it with new julep for a new customer.

The vendors preferred to be stationary instead of carrying the heavy hot weight when the recipient was still full with julep. They put it down at a street corner and shouted offering <sup>the</sup> ~~his~~ ware to passersby. Once, an elderly julep vendor at a corner, left standing the julep contraption to go to the near grocery store to change a coin. When he returned in a moment, the container was not there. Frantically running, desperately searching, found the contraption overturned in the next street, the faucet broken, the hot julep flowing on the pavement, the burning coal dispersed all around. The helpless man wept bitterly. It was so pathetic that even the gang did not enjoy it. Some people who grasped what happened, went chasing them and if one of the gang would be caught, he would be certainly lynched by the enraged citizens. Their young running feet saved them from the worst.

Or it was the chestnut vendor who sat in winter at a cold street on a primitive wooden stool. Before him a thick tin contraption with an opening in its middle with burning coal and a kind of grill on it, made of a piece of iron sheet with holes <sup>pierced</sup> ~~made~~ with a nail. It stood on three shaky iron feet and was on the level of the sitting man. Around the fire was a kind of round self full of chestnuts. As soon as the chestnuts were broiled, the man put them on the self. People liked hot chestnuts in the cold days. The gang would manage again to bind a string to one of the <sup>three</sup> ~~contraption~~ feet and pulled it from a safe distance. ~~and~~ In a moment it laid reversed and ruined in the middle of the street. In an other case, they took away the loaded donkey of a vegetable vendor, while he was eating at a tavern and left it several streets further running aimless.

They stopped going for such cruel pranks, but they did not cease totally.



They did all for fun, their own. Most of them were thoughtless, senseless, often causing real harm and damage. They never stole anything or went for profit. They ~~stopped~~ <sup>ceased</sup> with vendors, donkeys and destruction of wares and they went on more "innocent" pranks. Finally it caught with them. One such prank changed the entire life of the famous "ninio", created a storm grabbing him like a feather in a wild fury and threw him a thousand miles away. The young man never recovered from the blow for the rest of his life.

We are now in the Istanbul of the near mid - 1880's. Though a more enlightened town than any other in the <sup>East</sup> Mediterranean, the administrative procedures were mostly medieval, the rule of the Government highly authoritarian with the Sultan being the center of everything, good or evil, just or unjust, the sole source of laws and regulations, according to his whims and moods. He was the absolute Monarch of the Turkish empire as well as the "Khalif" or spiritual and religious head of all the hundreds of millions of Moslems everywhere. He was considered as the successor of the Prophet Mohamed with much more power than the Pope in Rome ever had. He was the "Padissah", the exalted ruler and as the "Khalif" (representative) he represented everything Moslem. There were no elections on any level and all the officials, dignitaries and civil servants were appointed on his or on behalf of his will. The system never changed. With the advent of every new Sultan, the Defender of the Faith as he was called, it was only a question of how more or less tyrannical and oppressive ruler he would be. People trembled and were scared, but the status of the minorities remained more or less unchanged.

A decade earlier, by mid of the 1870's, one of the bloodiest ~~of~~ Sultans, Abdul Hamid the II (1842-1918) was enthroned. He was the 34th and last of the Osmanlis, the Osman dynasty. It was rare in Turkish history that he <sup>could</sup> ~~have~~ such a long reign (1876-1909). ~~He~~ lived to be an old man and he was not assassinated like so many other Sultans. Generally the minorities were left alone, provided they would pay their taxes. The advent of a new Sultan meant special taxes or "voluntary" presents to him in various forms. The anxiety of the people subsided when the new "firmans" or royal decrees were made known and ways were found out how to circumvent their harshness, mostly by bribery.

The new reign started liberally, but it became harder after the defeat of Turkey in the war with Russia in 1878. Life became more hazardous and under this ruler more so. He became a symbol of inhumane cruelty in Turkish history. The Abdul Hamid era was full of terror in everyday life. The town was full of obscure informers. Blackmail, intrigue, extortion and corruption were the order of the day at all levels. If you were involved in something, real or imaginary, your salvation often depended on how you greased the palm of hand of several people along

the line. Men disappeared and some of them were found later floating into jute bags out there in the sea of Bosphorus if the attached heavy stones broke away. The victims were mostly Turks, but nobody was really safe. The "Kadis" or regional judges based their judgment on religious tradition or their own criteria and not on any written law or even precedent. Also a variety of other officials dispensed justice as they saw fit or according to bribery. Nobody felt secure.

Jews were better off than everybody else. They were always the most tolerated minority in Turkey. Leon, now twenty two, was the assistant of Yahiel Pardo and it seemed that he soon would succeed him as the manager of the umbrellas department. He was always the special young man in the entire Jewish community and was making it good. He was by all expected to marry a good girl, settle down, have a nice family and live gloriously everafter.

The trend was for girls to marry early. Males were marrying later, often in their mid or late twenties. The social pressure to marry was universal so that an unmarried woman or man was an oddity. A spinster or an older bachelor man were often considered as socially inferior. There were no forced marriages in childhood ages, but every young adult was supposed to get married.

Leon and his friends went to swim, frequented often the "Karagioz" theater, made excursions to the surroundings and the islands with the fascinating landscapes, sometimes they were in a small tavern at the sea shore to drink some wine, to smoke and to chat. They were a bunch of vivacious boys, all in their early twenties, knowing each other well from early childhood, meeting at the Synagogue and social events and all ~~of them were~~ the offspring of prominent families.

In the life of man, there are always rare moments influencing the course of his entire future, up or down. Sometimes the consequences are frightening, like an unexpected hurricane reversing and turning everything upside down. And so it was:

*Saturday*  
On a balmy afternoon of 1885, Leon and his best friend Yoshua Beza decided to take a walk at the shore, at the near Turkish neighborhood, to swim, to stroll or rent a boat to get around. They did this often together. As they were getting out of the neighborhood, Nathan the shorty ran after them to join. He was the son of Leon's brother Aaron the Taylor. He was diminutive, scarcely over 5 feet tall, dwarfing him against the six feet of his uncle-friend Leon. As Nathan was a common name, people called him, Nathan the shorty. Though ~~of the~~ same age with Leon, Nathan looked very boyish and certainly not over sixteen. He had nearly no hair at all on his face, he was shy, he spoke always in a defensive manner constantly gesturing in an apparent emphasis of his complex of inferiority.



~~A Saturday~~ <sup>It was</sup> at the beginning of May, the month "ninio" was born and a "lazy" day in Istanbul in the middle of the three rest days of the three religions. The three friends, munching <sup>passa tempo</sup> baked pumpkin seeds, strolled aimless on the shore sands joking and kidding Nathan about his fears and shyness. This Turkish residential neighborhood with the lime whitewashed houses appeared so peaceful. Everywhere <sup>wide</sup> green leafed plants climbed on the house walls. Flowers and various aromatic plants in all kinds and sizes of clay pots and wooden boxes were aligned on window panes and along the walls in the vast backyards. The delicious spring fragrances mixed to the salty sea breeze delightfully pervaded the air. The most glorious and serene spring afternoon it could be anywhere in the world.

Then life was by far simpler and less complicated. People were content with what they had. They toiled hard to have a shelter, enough food on the table for the family and they were fortunate if everyone in the household was in good health. <sup>The Moslems</sup> Devotedly religious, falling on their knees for prayers the prescribed five times a day, going to the nearest Mosque when the Muezzin's loud chanting of the "~~Allah Akbar~~" (~~and God is Great~~) was heard from the Minaret, the Mosque tower, taking their shoes off, washing their feet, before entering for prayer.

It was literally a man's world. Men went out to earn the bread and butter for the family. Women rarely ventured outside their homes and when it happened, they were all covered except <sup>to</sup> their eyes. Men socialized at the "Karagioz" or in neighborhood coffee houses and taverns where they drank the strong ~~Arak~~, Raki or ouzo from small glasses, continually nibbling on the local delicacies, just fried fish, goat cheeses, <sup>meta</sup> flaming hot Kashkaval cheese, very small meat balls fried with a lot of aromatic ingredients, the sadzik made of yoghurt, cucumbers, much garlic and olive oil all thoroughly worked out, pastourma, air dried meat treated with a lot of sharp paprika and other foods. ~~And~~ They sang the langorous and monotonous folklore songs for hours. And they smoked the narghileh.

<sup>most applied</sup> The ~~universal~~ manner of smoking tobacco was by Narghileh. A big bottle of very thick glass with a protruding belly, ~~with~~ a hole in the lower part to accommodate a long flexible hose having at the other end a mouthpiece of yellow amber. In the long ~~wooden~~ neck of the bottle was a long wooden piece inserted in it. <sup>into</sup> ~~the wooden piece~~ <sup>was</sup> a flat piece with a small receptacle made of polished copper tin. In every coffee house there was the skilled narghileh man who wetted tobacco leaves of various sizes, put them expertly into the <sup>copper</sup> ~~metal~~ receptacle one on the other forming a solid round cake and leaving a small hole in the bottom for the air through the wooden piece and into the Narghileh. Finally he half filled the bottle with water and put a burning coal on the cake. The smoker inhaled forcing the smoke of the burning tobacco cake through the water and the hose to the mouthpiece.

A narghileh was to be slowly smoked for hours at a time. When the coal was consummated, or the tobacco cake needed mending or renewing, the Narghileh ~~ma~~ was there to do it promptly. Especially when people played cards or baggamon, the narghileh was constantly at their side and the mouthpiece at their hand. It was quite a spectacle, those middleaged men with the long beards and the hanging moustaches, wearing the white <sup>robes</sup> ~~robes~~ called "gelebiyas" and the red Fezes or hats with the long hanging thread tassels from the top to the side or ~~the~~ rear. Usually two ~~players~~ <sup>men</sup> sat at a table playing the game while all around, sitting or standing a number of others followed intensely the dice and every move made by the players, commenting, criticizing, kibbitzing, needling each other, sometimes betting money on the outcome of each game. People got very absorbed and excited.

The three friends, Leon, Yoshua and Nathan saw a small outdoors coffee house and as they were thirsty from munching too many <sup>salted</sup> pumpkin seeds, they thought to go there for a glass of water. A ~~very small~~ place with a dozen of round thick iron sheet tables standing on three feet and painted green, simple crude chairs of wood and straw. ~~Nearly~~ <sup>for</sup> people at every table, on several of them going backgammon games and vivid discussions on the going of each. ~~A lot of people~~. It was then that Yoshua and Leon had an idea <sup>for</sup> an other prank. Nathan the shorty had never ideas of his own. He simply followed every time the others.

At a table two older men ~~played Backgammon~~ <sup>absorbed to the game</sup>, surrounded by several other people who heatedly gave advice ~~on the game~~ and excitedly discussed what would have happened if that or the other move would be different. The sun was slowly setting down, a huge red disc far into the sea.

Yoshua with a cigarette in his hand, bent to a narghileh <sup>standing up</sup> on the ground, next to one of the players, to light ~~it~~ <sup>it</sup>. This was highly improper for any man to do and especially for a young man to an old man. An outright insult considered a serious <sup>implication</sup> ~~insult~~ involving the questionning of the manhood of the narghileh man. As everyone was deeply 'absorbed with the game, nobody noticed Yeshua doing it. Then Leon bent to light his cigarette on the coal of the same narghileh, but someone noticed him. The smoker, a venerable old Turk, glanced in utter disbelief at the unknown young man still bent on his narghileh. An outright effrontery. With anger and frustration on his face he reacted promptly. As Leon finished lighting his cigarette, received a strong blow on the back of his head and his forehead came in touch with the burning coal causing <sup>him</sup> an unbearable pain. It <sup>brought</sup> ~~spoke~~ him to rage. Without thinking much, he seized the nargileh violently and thrustured it on the ground with such a force that it immediately desintegrated in pieces, splinters of glass, tobacco, water, other parts splashing near and far.

Now that was something awful to do to an old bearded man. It was an un-<sup>white</sup>



heard of offence, it was murder, it was a matter of life or death. A dozen of people around who witnessed the scene, stood there for a moment frozen, petrified except Yoshua and Leon who started running for their lives. Very soon the crowd of onlookers and players were after them in chase, cursing, swearing, shouting, twenty, thirty, forty of them, with their beards and the long white or striped "gelebiyas" waving as they frantically and unruly ran. But the young men could not be outrun by the oldsters. Jews have stronger feet than the gentiles because they exercised them too much running ~~throughout~~ throughout their history. The danger however, was real, but right then one of those things happened to pull them off the mortal peril at the right moment.

And this was of all things the last one in the world they expected to rescue them. As usual, Nathan got scared and stayed at a distance during the incident with the narghileh. He always wanted to have the fun and the laugh without the risk. The whole incident lasted only a couple of minutes. Though nobody would implicate Nathan in this, as he saw that wild crowd of bearded people screaming and running, he panicked and started running too, at the opposite direction. ~~of his friends and their pursuers.~~ This attracted the attention of the crowd which for a moment pursued him and caught him on the spot. Nathan received some beating while he cried and repeated: I don't know them, I don't know anything about them, I am not with them. Somehow they left him alone and resumed the chasing of Leon and Yoshua, but the brief incident with Nathan caused the crowd to slow the pursuit and still increased the distance to the chased youths.

~~There~~ was just the fateful ingredient needed. As the two youths were running to save their skin, they anxiously turned their heads a few times as to measure the distance between them and their hunters. They witnessed clearly how Nathan was caught and beaten, but they missed it when he was released and run alone to the opposite direction.

The pursuing people tired from running and apparently also reluctant to get too far from their neighborhood, stopped the pursuit still cursing and swearing. Though no one was behind them anymore, Yoshua and Leon were so scared that they went on running until no air was left anymore into their lungs. When they fell on the sands to catch their breath, it was in a desolate and deserted shore, out of the town. It was already dark.

Far somewhere they saw ~~some~~ small lighted houses, but who dared to go to them? They were not even aware who lived there and where they were. Nearby they saw two small heavily damaged boats lying on the sand, apparently abandoned there since years. They went to sit in one of them. Now the nearly full moon came out casting its mellow transparent light. All around silence except for the mo-

notonous gentle murmur of the waves breaking at nearby low cliffs.

Now what, the two friends repeated asking each other? Now what? They talked about Nathan the shorty and they were sure he was caught. They saw it. And they knew well their Nathan. He certainly had spilled out names and addresses. And they knew well that the Turks were very sensitive to such incidents, especially if the offenders belonged to one of the minorities. This could mean the end for them and certainly a lot of trouble for the Sevillea and the Beza families. In the best of cases, it could cost a fortune in bribery money. May be the man of that narghileh was some dignitary or a close friend of one. In such things you had the impression that all the Turks were somehow related to each other. If only that idiot Nathan would not have joined them or would <sup>have</sup> stay out of it. They mused, nobody would implicate Nathan if he would not ~~panic~~ and run like a wild goat. Their imagination went out of bounds, their fears so exaggerated and the incident took a size out of proportion in their minds. They were stiffly scared and had good reason to be,

Now Sultan's Abdul Hamid regime was becoming more and more oppressive and anything bringing people in contact with any of the authorities could cause danger and peril. Leon, out of insecurity, had always an amount of money in one of his internal pockets though never had a need of it. Yoshua Beza had none. They understood, their only salvation was disappearing for a while from this town. Such incidents were always forgotten after a while. For Leon out of town meant somewhere abroad, out of Turkey. Yoshua said, he would try to go to Izmir, the other important harbor town of Turkey, where a close relative branch of his family was well established. He could stay there for a year or two and then return to Istanbul. Izmir was very far for anyone to persecute him.

Yoshua would not run abroad leaving his family for good. He was a "behor", a first born son and he was to take over some day the family business, the main warehouse in Istambul importing all kinds of spices from near and far, among them the most exotic ones. A very lucrative business as people used a lot of spices. Entering in that warehouse was an adventure in itself because of the great variety of smells which were different depending on where you were in those vast premises. Everywhere piles of bales and wooden cases with tea, cinamon, pepper, vanilla and all the other. Now, he wanted to go early in the morning to the house of an uncle leaving in an other neighborhood, to ask for a ticket to go to Izmir.

The fateful sequence of events continued. It was just the lack of information between the involved sides that made it all so fateful. Nathan the shorty



ran all the way to the Jewish neighborhood and went straight to his uncle Jacob. He did not even know if Leon and Yoshua were caught by the Turks and what happened to them. Promptly the Bezas heard about it. Jacob with <sup>the father of</sup> Beza went immediately to that shore, now totally deserted, that coffee house closed, nobody there. Searching would be futile and might be dangerous. They had to wait for the new days break and hope the best. Nobody slept in the two houses that night.

After the long discussion the two friends fell asleep in that boat. Fortunately the temperature was on the warm side. With the first daylight were awakened. They were calm by now and resolved to implement what they had decided. They separated there, at that dilapidated boat and took different directions. These two so close friends have never again met in life but they often thought upon each other. My father had only fond memories about Yoshua up to late in his life.

Leon took the long way to the port along the shore. On the backyard of a Mosque ~~he~~ washed his hands and his face. There was always water running there. When he reached the port it was nearly seven o'clock. The noisy activity was at a peak. Kaiks and barges pushing each other for space, were unloading all kinds of agricultural produce and fruit or fish. A great numbers of shopkeepers and street vendors were there with their carts, hand or donkey drawn, selecting, bargaining, bidding for the wares. Strong husky porters carried away on their backs incredibly bulky and heavy weights. Along the dock there were some barrack like coffee houses and restaurants with the sharp smell of "Patsa" cooking, the thick lamb ~~and~~ tripe and feet soup, filling the air. People were sitting at <sup>rough</sup> ~~rough~~ square wooden tables, filling their soup plates with pieces of bread and eating hastily. The entire place was an organized chaos, somehow working every morning up to early afternoon.

It was the first time Leon was there. In his expensive European suit, the immaculate red Fez on his head with the long silk thread tassel hanging at the side, his neat appearance and reluctant attitude, Leon was out of place. He drew the curious glances of anyone who had the time to look at him, because everyone was very busy. He did not know what to do. Finally, he dared to ask a restaurant waiter about any shipping office. There were many bigger ships anchored all around that port. He was told, that the offices will soon start opening. As he went further, he saw a short husky middleaged man opening the door of a little wooden cabin with a crude faded slate above in Turkish, Greek and French: "Shipping Agency" on it. He was jovially exchanging jokes in Greek with someone cleaning a boat.

He went to him timidly. Is any boat going abroad, Leon asked? The man looked at him with suspicion, curiosity and surprise. He replied slowly: Yes,

there is one at noon, for Marseille, France. Where you want to go? Anywhere the the young man said, anywhere, but I need to go right now. Is there any leaving right now, he asked in anguish? No, the agent answered, wait a minute, may be if we can still reach it. It is going to Piraeus, Greece. He pointed his finger at a cargo ship slowly manoeuvring to get to the open sea. That's it, he said, but can you climb in it, no other way. Please, hold it a little. I must board it, I must. Have you money to pay them, the old man asked. Yes, I have Leon said. He added unconvincingly, please, it is just to Piraeus I want to go. Thick sweat drops were on his face.

Let's move, said the agent and both ~~sp~~ jumped into a row boat vigorously rowing towards that ship. The jovial face of the Greek darkened in concern. What is it boy, he asked. In trouble? He knew well these wicked times and felt a pity for the young man. There were often such hasty departures, but this was too hasty. He continued sympathetically. We will see about your good luck. Then he ventured, you know something, I have a son like you. I think one of these days I will put him on a vessel going to Greece to have a decent life, not like that.

The little boat was already before the still slowly moving big ship. The man shouted in Greek, palms around his mouth, to a sailor leaning on the upper rail: Ghiorghi, I have someone who must be with you, throw a rope ladder, move. The sailor ~~shouted~~ <sup>added</sup>: Can he do it? The agent shouted: Move. Promptly a long rope ladder rolled down, waving in the air as the vessel manipulated. The whole bulk of the ship was noisily alive. The old man was concerned. Can you make it boy, can you swim, he wanted to know. Leon gave him the money and somehow managed to get hold of the ladder.

He succeeded to put his foot on the balancing first support. The Greek followed anxiously each of his movements saying: May be you are smarter than all of us here, lame ducks. As he made repeatedly the sign of the cross, he added, God bless you. It was some feat climbing that rope ladder on a moving ship. In the meantime several sailors had gathered on the various rails watching and encouraging the young man in Greek of which he knew only a few words. This climbing was a hasardous matter. As ~~he~~ finally his head reached the level of the first railing, four strong arms grasped him, lifted him like a feather and pulled him in. He landed on his feet dizzy, confused and happy. The Greek agent at the boat down was shouting: Good luck boy, good luck. Leon needed just that.

If this was not a twist of fate, then there is none. At that same hour, strange things incurred in Istanbul. Very early morning the message of Yoshua reached the Beza house through his uncle and the Sevillias were informed immediately. It was about seven thirty in the morning when Jacob and Yohanan Sevilla



were at the port searching for Leon. Someone told them that a young man was talking with that old man just rowing back on a boat. They learned from him what was with Leon. They saw the Greek cargo ship gaining speed and disappearing towards the open sea and getting smaller and smaller. The whitehaired Jacob broke down in utter despair and wept bitterly. At that same moment Leon watched the disappearing skyline of Istanbul, the town where he was born and raised and he realized the cruel situation.

Such an irony. The brothers were unknowingly at the opposite ends of a line grieving about the same thing. But for each of them this had a different meaning. For the older brother it was a tremendous loss, a deception of fate, a ruin of hopes and dreams. For the young it was in some way, a fulfilment of a desire, a long secret dream, a starting of a new future. For the one a great failure for the other the beginning of an achievement.

It was absurd. The young man was going away like a bird into the sky. How about all those left behind, who had adopted him since just before his birth, loved him and idolized him all these years, who wanted the best for him? He appeared in the lives of those people as an improbable phenomenon, descending from the clear heavens. Now, fading away so ungloriously, without a mere goodbye even to his close relatives, a simple thank you, a hug and an embrace. He went to nowhere. In those times to contact Greece from Istanbul was more difficult than it is today to reach Japan. He was the great sensation in the simple life of that community. They have never seen again the "ninio" and never heard from him again.

On the ship people sensed the tragedy. A man took Leon ~~tenderly~~<sup>gently</sup> by his arm and guided him to an internal railing and made him sit down. They brought hot fresh bread, olives, goat cheese feta, tomatoes, sausage slices and a Turkish coffee. They told him to eat, we have a long sailing, everything will work out. Everyone spoke fluently Turkish.

He was going to Greece, only by chance. He could be going anywhere in the world, to France, Africa, America, everywhere. Strengthened by the friendly attitude of those sailors, fascinated by the unknown adventure, as he watched the foaming waters of the sea, he thought less about what he left and wondered more about what life ahead had in store for him. Kismet, destiny.

A TOUCH OF DESTINY

As the ship headed to the open sea, Leon settled there comfortably. The excitement of leaving everything, even his own personal belongings back ~~there~~, was gradually replaced by the excitement of the adventure. The unknown overwhelmed him putting the past to an increased distance, more and more up to oblivion. There was something final, something done which cannot be undone, a "fait accompli". It reached a point that the journey took the resemblance of a vacation for this young man as the days passed and the ship stopped shortly in various islands to take more cargo. Everyone treated him friendly and with some deference on that ship. Good food, passing his time watching the crew working hard or bending from one of the railings looking at the waves or the far empty horizon and absorbed in reverie.

It lasted five days when on a sunny morning the vessel arrived at the port of Piraeus, at that ~~time~~ <sup>time</sup> just a big village of fishermen and at the same time the main port of Greece, a dwarf in comparison to the port of Istanbul. About four miles from there was the glorious town of Athens and Leon knew, he had to go there.

At that time, this famous town was emerging out of the dust, the slumber and the negligence of the past fifteen centuries. The mighty Byzantines had this town for over one thousand years and never shown the least interest for its history, its antiquities, its remarkable ancient achievements. The Byzantine empire created as the separate eastern half of the then declining Roman empire by Constantin the Great (280-337), was totally indifferent to Ancient Greece though they spoke Greek and called themselves Greeks as the centuries went on.

If the Byzantines did not care much about ancient Greece, so did also the Turks who dissolved their empire when conquering their last bastion, Constantinople, as named for Constantin the Great. They renamed it Istanbul, a name never recognized by the Greeks, who call it Constantinople to this very day and dream about re-conquering it and making it again the capital of Greece. As Leon came to this place, all around the hill of Acropolis, it was a town of about thirty thousand hard toiling people, the seat of the Government of new Greece and starting to awake from the dark centuries of neglect with new industry, commerce and ~~business~~ tourism.

Leon did what every stranger Jew <sup>does always</sup> ~~did~~ everywhere, in all the centuries in the dispersion, when arrived in an unknown place. He went straight to the Synagogue. There a man is sure to find willing ears for his problems, sympathetic and unconditional guidance, assistance, advice. It is a main "Mitzvah" under all circumstances, one of the basic tenets, caring for the stranger. With the Sephardic Jews there was a particular committee for the purpose and at least one man



was permanently assigned to receive strangers and care for them swiftly, no red tape and no questions asked, as soon as he knew for sure that the stranger was Jewish. Help first, ask later.

Though everyone knows about the Synagogue, I will add a word here. It is not a Hebrew word, it is Greek and means "Place of Meeting", a translation to the Hebrew "Be't Haknesset" meaning the same. In Ancient Israel there were no Synagogues, only one "Temple" in Jerusalem to where Jews pilgrimated from near and far to worship. After the dissolution and destruction of the "Temple" by the Romans (70 this era), the Jews in the many towns of the dispersion created their Synagogues to gather and worship. As the centuries passed by, the Synagogue became the main institution, the wedding point, fermenting and developing the Jewish activity and life, the unic sustaining element to the preservation of the heritage of Israel.

Greece was at that time territorially small consisting of part of continental Greece and some islands. The biggest part of this nation was occupied by the Turks, Italians and even the British. The new Greece came into existence after a handful of Greeks in 1821 revolted against the Turks and in a long and blood fight for eight years they won the right to proclaim the first sovereign Greece after nearly two thousand years, most of which passed in oblivion and under foreign conquest.

Athens now was small and poor, but so were a great number of towns in <sup>the</sup> Balkan and even in Europe. In the middle of the nineteenth century a new Jewish congregation was formed in town and at the time Leon appeared, there was already a small organized Jewish Community of about fourty to fifty families, mostly originating from places under Turkish rule. Their main language was Spanish, their second one Turkish and their third was a more or less wanting Greek. In the Sephardic tradition, there was an open Jewish neighborhood taking a few short and narrow streets where also quite a number of Christians lived. As always, this neighborhood was near the Synagogue.

Leon was received well, invited in homes, guided and helped to a temporary settlement. At that time, <sup>and later</sup> the great majority of Jews in Athens were engaged in that perennial first occupation, peddling. Very often, it was the starting cornerstone to future opulence. The womenfolk in the homes helped meet ends with handknitting and embroidering gatments. Most of the peddling was in all kinds of fabrics. In early morning, the man spread a bed sheet on the floor, put in it pieces and bolts of cotton textiles making a tight bundle, put it on his back and went by foot to a distant neighborhood to peddle his wares. It depended from ability and luck how lighter the heavy bundle would be in the afternoon when the man came back home.

Those Jews, as elsewhere, invented peddling and instalment payments in that

time and town. Doubtful if there was any non-Jewish peddler. Mostly they could not write in Greek and very often not in any other language. They developed for that an amazing ability to add, subtract and multiply by memory and also memorized past sales, histories of people, names, addresses, times and days they would best meet <sup>customers</sup> ~~people~~. As business increased, the typical peddler acquired a small scrapbook and noted down in Hebrew or Spanish or even in Greek if he could, transaction and debts, mostly understandable only to him as he often used only first names or simply areas of town. If he died, nobody knew anything. Later, he needed more than that. Progress came, two pocket scrapbooks for each customer, one kept by the latter who knew at all times what he owed and the other kept by the peddler. The "second generation", the peddler's offspring who entered the business in tender age, organized the accountancy better. If no son was around and the peddler became older, a young man was hired, a kind of successor. A customer was captive, always owing money to the peddler and before having paid all, he ordered new merchandise, a child was born or a daughter got married or things had to be for a future dowry. Territories of peddling were silently established and in case of retirement or opening of an own shop, these territories and the receivables were sold or given away to sons, as any other business. As time passed, business became more sophisticated. Some peddlars bought carts with donkeys though a successful one went around with very few fabrics, only what was ordered the previous day, and a lot of swatches to show for new orders. Some very solid fortunes sprang out of this. But some of the peddlars were worn out prematurely, remained always poor and died <sup>early</sup> ~~prematurely~~. Their children often had a better luck.

The Jews wanted to help Leon and make him self-supporting. The problem was that they had to offer him one only thing, peddling and this did not appeal at all to <sup>him</sup> ~~him~~. Imagine, running with a heavy bundle on the back all day, six days a week, rain, cold and heat. Peddling was done in Istanbul too, mainly by Jews and a few Armenians and Greeks, but not by members of families like the Sevillias. One of his brothers, Yohanan, was in the peddling profession for a while, but on a higher level, a kind of moving shop on a large donkey cart.

Leon told them. I am an umbrella maker. Why can't I earn a living out of it? Does it not rain in Athens, Greece? They shook their heads pessimistically. Yes, true they said, it rains and pours in Athens too, but who cares for umbrellas here around? It is a luxury. You will starve waiting for customers. It costs less to get wet. They wondered among themselves: What kind of man is this not wanting to be a peddler, losing the opportunity of probably making it by breaking his back for twenty or thirty years? Look at Moshe Asher, Abraham Vital and the others who have the big shops. Ah, those young people to day, they are soft, they want it served on a silver platter.



They could not let this man unaided. So one wanted to give a try. Down town Athens, at the corner of Eolos and Euripides Streets there was the only factory and retail shop of umbrellas in Greece, a kind of monopoly. It was owned by Mr. Simonides <sup>who</sup> ~~which~~ at that time and later was synonymous to umbrella. An exclusive business for decades. I believe, this shop exists up to present though under an other name and selling also men's furnishings.

Mr. Simonides was told that an outstanding specialist in umbrellas just arrived from Constantinople. He was trained by the French. It would be a good idea to hire him in a haste before the young man goes to France. Mr. Simonides shook his head approvingly and did just that, unknowingly contributing to the making of history for the Sevillias.

For the next eight years or so, Leon worked for Mr. Simonides. I don't know much about those years and my father did not say anything important about that period of his life. In a homogenous small society of identical origins where he assimilated thoroughly and where bachelor men were rather a rarity, why he remained unmarried for so long? I think it is because he wanted to emigrate to somewhere and especially more to America, as he always said. He must have been in a position to pay his passage. An other puzzle was why in all these years since then, did he not establish a workshop or a small factory producing umbrellas? Up to the end of his life, his business was restricted in repairing broken umbrellas and rarely receiving orders for making a new umbrella. Athens was fast increasing in population and importance. He was no drinker, gambler or womanizer. At the turn of this century, an other umbrella factory shop opened at Eolos Street, just near Mr. Simonides and it prospered for the next fifty years. When myself was a young man, I spoke to oldtimers who knew my father. They said, he was a good behaved, timid, clean man. He lived in indecision.

But in certain cases he was remarkably peculiar as when he made a dash for education. The general educational level of the people in Turkey and Greece of those times, was incredibly low. Schooling was not compulsory and if even everyone decided to go to school, there were by far not enough school facilities and teaching personnel to accomodate all. Getting even a secondary education was possible mainly to youths of well to do and wealthy families. The greatest educational burden was on primary education because children dropped out or taken off the school after two to four years to be put to work and earn money. They learned at least how to write and read while a lot of other children were never in school and remained all their lives long illiterate. This was in a much greater scale in the provinces and the smaller localities.

In spite of the fact that higher education was the privilege of a minority,

since the end of last century, a noticeable literary activity developed in Greece with a number of good historians, poets, writers and scientists. Most of them studied abroad, in Universities in France, Germany and elsewhere. Most of them belonged to upper class families. The conscience of some of them was aroused and they ~~were~~ wanted to do something to put education into the heads of children of the poorer families which in the majority were too numerous.

~~It was a slow process and the situation started to get better after World War I.~~  
~~At the~~ <sup>(last quarter)</sup> ~~of the~~ <sup>last</sup> century, a number of intellectuals founded a literary Club and one of its main purposes was to make <sup>primary</sup> education more accessible to the people. They named it "Parnassos" which is the name of a six thousand feet high mountain. At the feet of it there was the famous oracle town and temple of Delphi. According to the Greek Mythology, this mountain was the seat of the nine Muses and of the God of several arts Apollo. To him belonged the Temple of Delphi.

An appropriate name for a literary club. They erected one of the nicest buildings at the most central spot of the town, in classic form with elegant spacious halls and facilities. It became the center of all literary activity, social events, lectures, high society gatherings and celebrations, ~~leisure~~ The Government and the King often used its splendid halls or participated in events or even sponsored them. This building exists up to present and it is <sup>still</sup> used for the same purposes ~~now~~, even if there are quite a number of other literary clubs in town.

PARNASSOS rendered priceless services to the advancement of the spiritual and educational life in Greece in the past hundred years. On the ground floor it was a vast well paved back yard with spacious halls and rooms built all along the walls around. The first night elementary school in Greece was founded for the first six grades. It was just the schooling needed ~~all around~~ and they organized it well. In spite of unsurmountable difficulties and obstacles, this school lifted considerably the educational level of the people.

It was a unice experiment because it was based on the voluntary <sup>enrollment</sup> ~~study~~ by tots, children at the age of nine to fifteen who were already hard working bread-winners, sometimes sustaining partly or entirely whole families. There was no PTA and no parents coming and asking about the progress of their children, no I.Q. or aptitude tests or grade cards. Education was totally free, everyone come and served. Amazingly, it was little dropping out <sup>at least before the end of a year.</sup> If you were a working child, you went to that school because you knew a friend of yours studied there and because you really wanted to learn something.

The students, at all times, were a few hundred and all somewhere employed. The big problem was how to enable the willing children to reach the school. It started at six or six thirty evening and the lessons lasted for ~~two~~ and half to



three hours, from September to May. The employers, mostly workshops or stores, closed usually at eight P.M. or later. It was in their good will to let a child laborer to go earlier than that. Some did in admiration for a child of ten or twelve going to school on his free will after a hard day's labor. Myself I studied at the night school Parnassos for ~~four~~ years during ~~the~~ first World War and later and this was the base of my ~~informal~~ education. We used to ask an employer if he would agree to let us go to evening school or we would quit if he would deny us that.

Among those children were also the "self-employed", street vendors, shoe polishing, who theoretically were free to go to the evening school, but there were many temptations and difficulties and family duties and other. Usually parents were not interested to promote education of their children, especially when <sup>it</sup> interfered with their earnings. In general, a child had often to fight the adult world to strive for learning. The classes were crowded, the standards for such a school ~~were~~ high in comparison, the teachers ~~were~~ heroic in their efforts.

One year or so after his settlement in Athens, Leon heard about PARNASSOS and had the urge of learning Greek. His previous education in Constantinople, though higher than of many other children, consisted in the knowledge of praying in Hebrew and ritual, speaking and writing Spanish in Hebrew characters as it was usual in those times, speaking fluently Turkish and reading it with some difficulty. He knew French more or less well, but he was losing it by not using it. The usual age of the children at Parnassos was up to fifteen, but there were a few students ~~there~~ who were older, some over twenty five. They studied only for a short time, mainly in lower grades, just to learn how to write and read, to pass the line from illiterate to literate.

Leon was tall, slim and trim and he was the only one for whom Greek was not his mother language. His Greek by now was very broken. The teachers were interested in him and assisted him greatly. It is not easy to visualize the picture of him sitting at a bench among the children of nine or ten of the first or second elementary grade. There were mixed feelings in the community about his going every evening to school. Some scoffed at him and others respected his tenacity. He became an avid reader of the printed word in Greek.

Life went on for this lonely young man. He lived alone since <sup>about</sup> ~~two~~ four years. Though well liked by all, he had no intimate friends. He bought every day the newspaper, in Greek, and during his free time, he sat at the nearby coffee house to read it and have his Turkish coffee. He took some of his meals at the small tavern, he did not drink or very moderately, sometimes his landlady prepared something for him to eat or he did it for himself in his room. Nobody around had <sup>much</sup> ~~any~~ free time except the very old and unable to work. Leon did not socialize much except when in the Synagogue on holidays.

It happened on a Sunday forenoon. Someone <sup>rushed</sup> ~~came~~ from the Synagogue to tell him, there was a man who wanted to talk to him. It was already two or three times before that he met with people from Istanbul who brought or wanted to have news. Bored, he took the way to the Synagogue. ~~There~~ <sup>He</sup> had the surprise of his life freezing him on the spot. There was standing his brother-father Jacob looking very old, all white haired, his face covered with wringles, tears streaming down his pale cheeks, embracing him and repeating, Leonchico, Leonchico mio. It was heartbreaking. Leon deeply moved by the dramatic sudden encounter, could not utter a word, a thick lump in his throat.

It was quite a spectacle. The one in his prime of life still unmarried, the other approaching sixty, looking like seventy, with children and grandchildren. The one at the beginning and the other near the end. Incredible these two were brothers. Leon felt a great shame in the presence of this pathetic man. Now he could fully grasp all the magnitude of what happened, the absurdity and monstrosity of it, the injustice and the frustration he had caused to all those who loved him so much back in Istanbul. He felt never before so miserable.

Leon heard for the first time the full story of what really occurred at the day he fled Istanbul. Nathan the Shorty was not bothered by anyone and the families knew at the same evening about the incident. Then next morning Yoshua Beza appeared at the neighborhood. He described how Jacob and Yohanan rushed to the port to find their brother Leon, how fate caused it that they missed him only by half an hour, all the helplessness of watching that Greek cargo ship disappearing at the horizon. Then the great consternation and ~~the~~ sorrow in the neighborhood. It remained a permanent topic in the community. A year after that, Yoshua Beza married Rebecca, the daughter of Joseph Matalon. They have already two children a "behor" and a girl. and so it went. In fact, there was no need at all to flee. ~~\*\*\*\*~~

Now Jacob wanted to take Leon back to Istanbul, but the latter was not so enthusiastic with it. He said, he thought about emigrating to America. Why get back where people lived like that? By now, he <sup>2</sup> knew Greek and was acclimatized in Athens. Why start again in the Abdul Hamid country, he kept repeating. They had many discussions on that and Jacob tried hard to convince Leon. By the end Leon promised to visit the family in Istanbul before going to America. "Vamos a ver", we will see. Jacob remained in Athens for three weeks and the two brothers were constantly together, going places. Jacob admired Leon, how well he had assimilated, how well was acquainted with people and life in this new country.

Then came the day of departure ~~for Jacob~~. Leon brought his brother to Piraeus to board the French Liner coming from Marseille and going to Istanbul. A



heavy day. The separation was more heartbreaking than the encounter was three weeks before. The old man sitting on a bench on the ship's deck, crying silently, Leon standing by and trying to console him. Yes, certainly, he said, I will soon come to see you all and tell to every one that I think upon them every day. Both felt at the bottom of their heart, this was the ~~first~~ last time seeing each other Jacob offered again money to Leon. He did not accept it. He insisted, "hermano" I really don't need any. Then the time came Leon had to get out of the ship. The old embraced tightly the young murmuring, Leonchico, Leonchico mio. As Leon stepped down the ladder and jumped into the rowing boat, he felt a relief it was over

Leon stood at the moor waving at the maneuvering vessel and shouting his last greetings to his brother standing at the railing. The ship moved to the port exit and gradually disappeared from sight. Leon sat on a mooring stone and sobbed bitterly looking at the sea. It was the first time he wept since his brother arrived. How cruel can life be, he thought. Now, he knew, the last tie to his previous life, his people, all his past, was broken.

The Jewish community of Athens increased in size. While it was purely Sephardic, a few "Ashkenazic" families settled in Athens and became for long an integral part of the congregation. The Silvermanns, The Goldsteins and other. Some came also from Egypt, pushed out when the Arabs revolted against the Europeans in the late 1880's and early 1890's. The umbrella maker Mr. Simonides contributed unknowingly to an other chapter of the Seville history. ~~As other tale,~~

Once upon a time a young man named Heinrich Weinberg was some place in Europe. Not known where. It is a common Jewish name and it could belong to a man from Russia, Germany, Rumania, Hungary, Poland or some other country. Probably it was Germany because the man knew well German. A husky strong man of medium height, well travelled, polished, speaking several languages. We find him in Alexandria, Egypt. In his mid-thirties, a jovial man, a goldsmith and watchmaker of skill and ability. As strange as it is, he was there on official business, to fill a need in the country. It was so:

As prescribed, Moslems have to pray five times a day, kneeling and with their forehead touching the ground. The "Muezin" or Mosque servant calls the faithful to it from the "Minaret", the Mosque tower. The prayer times must be rigidly kept. The most solemn are the first in the morning and the last prayer in the afternoon. The "Muezin" with his strong melodic voice chants the traditional "Allahu Akbar", our God is Great, in a wailing sequence.

To keep the right prayer times, the "muezins" had to rely <sup>4</sup> on the big public clocks. A pocket watch in those times was a ~~great~~ <sup>very few</sup> luxury. ~~Nobody~~ possessed one. Accuracy was important and public clocks could not always be trusted. Someone

was needed to supervise and repair them. Alexandria was the seat of the many and the mighty. It seems that in those time nobody could be located to tame the clocks. It must have been devilish to import for that a Jew from a Christian country, but no alternative. So they hired Heinrich Weinberg to secure the clocks. I don't know where <sup>at that time</sup> this man married or when did he come in Egypt. His wife, a delicate and educated woman named Rosa, originated from Naples, Italy and was taller than her husband whom she called Errico. They had several children of which only two survived and grew up, a boy named Victor and a girl by the name of Lisa.

Egypt was <sup>at that time</sup> under a nominal Turkish rule, but the land was administered by a "Khedive" or viceroy under the supervision of the "Khalif" the religious Head of all Moslems who was also the same Sultan Abdul Hamid in Istanbul. When the British in 1882 conquered Egypt replacing the Turks, friction and heavy bloody clashes developed. *It was a foreign rule by infidels.*

I have nearly no information about the families of Errico and Rosa. I know that the Jewish family of Rosa was since long rooted in Italy and was wealthy engaging in commerce. They had their own ships transporting their ware in the Mediterranean.

Until the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, Egypt was a closed country to all outside infidels. Then it was flooded by Europeans in greed for profit. Under the Turkish rule, this flooding was under some control, but when the British came (1882) a lot more Europeans followed and soon had everything in hand with extraterritorial rights and privileges, in case of mischief not subjected to the laws of the land and judged by their foreign consular courts.

The masses of people were fanatically religious and resented the Europeans. In 1885 in Sudan a disastrous revolution was led by a man who proclaimed himself to be a Messenger of Allah. The killing and burning and looting spread out in all of Egypt. Panik seized the Europeans and everyone was fleeing for the bare life, leaving everything behind. The European Governments sent ships to Alexandria <sup>to take every appearing</sup> ~~who took any European who came~~, sailed to <sup>by 1902</sup> ~~nearby~~ secure ports and returned to take more. Heinrich, Rosa and their two little children landed in Piraeus, Greece. They found a refuge in Athens and made part of the community. It was in 1888.

The children were very young, Victor twelve and Lisa eight years old. For the parents it was hard and they really never assimilated. In the early 1890's, Heinrich had a small ~~repair~~ watch repair shop near the Jewish neighborhood. Rosa with daughter Lisa who meantime was 12 years old, worked their eyes out in knitting and embroidering. Victor, now sixteen, was with a publishing house apprenticing in bookbinding. He must have gone to some school because, when I knew him later, he mastered well Greek in reading and writing. They spoke among themselves in Ita-



lian which also Heinrich handled well. Rosa and daughter Lisa soon used Spanish because everyone in their street spoke in it and it is so similar to Italian. ~~Those two assimilated best.~~

Watchmaking was not the most profitable business in those times. Most of the time he was idle, sitting outside his small shop watching the traffic. Though educated in languages, he had considerable difficulty in learning <sup>well</sup> ~~good~~ Greek. He constantly <sup>was</sup> ~~was~~ angered about something and socialized little with people. An unhappy man, often bored and frustrated. For health reasons he had to stop smoking and considered it as a blow. Sometimes in the evening, on his way home, he stopped at a little tavern <sup>to have</sup> ~~a little~~ <sup>some</sup> of that harsh Greek wine Retsina. He sat usually alone for half or one hour at a primitively hewn wooden table, a glass of wine, a piece of goat milk cheese and a few olives on a piece of paper, listening to the discordant songs of other wine drinkers. Then he went home, more boring than the tavern.

The humble tavern always was in Greece, and still is in some places there, a kind of institution. It was <sup>mostly</sup> ~~on~~ a backyard or in a basement or in a wooden shack, a row of huge wooden barrels with the wine fermenting in them, a fry pan or two hanging, some plates and dishes, olives, cheese, saussages and the like. The people gather in the evening in the "taverna" to drink for hours while eating something, fried "Marida", a kind of thin smelt fish or something else. Then all topics in the world are discussed there, particularly ~~none~~ politics, which is the national pastime. Sometimes things went out of hand, quarrels and even violence results. And they sing a lot. It is the best and the least expensive refuge.

And there happened again something. Heinrich was alone at that tavern sipping his wine. He thought if only Victor would be home to talk a little, but Victor now was rarely home in the early evening. He had acquired friends. With the women nothing doing. They would be at a corner knitting and talking to each other. At the table back <sup>of him</sup> ~~in~~ the tavern there were four people heavily drinking and noisily singing. One of them decided to <sup>home</sup> ~~get~~ and as he passed, lost his foot, pushed and reversed the table Heinrich was sitting <sup>at</sup> ~~at~~, throwing wine and cheese on the floor. Heinrich, without a word, with apparent disgust, lifted the table and the glass from the floor. The incident could end there, but the drunkard went on insulting and cursing. Heinrich <sup>he</sup> ~~got~~ angry. Still without uttering a word, <sup>he</sup> caught the man, lifted him in the air and unceremoniously threw him in the dusty street under the hysterical laughter of everyone ~~there~~. The man stood up painfully and shouted at Heinrich. You will not get away with this. I will show you who I am. Heinrich paid his wine and went home.

About ten days passed since then. Heinrich was a couple of times in the tavern without seeing that man. He forgot the incident. It seems Heinrich had some respiratory ailment and the doctor suggested some exercise. Every morning he got

up at dawn and took a walk in the country which was at that time not far from down town. He enjoyed the fresh air along the vegetable planted fields and the grazing lambs and goats and the olive trees. The walk lasted one hour. <sup>Then</sup> He went straight to open <sup>his</sup> the small ~~watch repair~~ shop, ordered a Turkish coffee at the coffee house next door and ate cheese with bread or some fruit. It started his day.

A balmy morning in early June, the birds singing on the trees, the atmosphere transparent and the air pure and fragrant, a perfect ~~spring~~ morning. Heinrich felt well and happy as he walked leisurely back to town ~~and he hummed~~ <sup>humming</sup> a song he used to like many years back. And there it happened:

Suddenly, a man hidden behind a tree jumped before Heinrich with a <sup>sort</sup> kind of long stileto in his right hand, the kind used by leather workers. ~~He~~ was very excited, menacingly throwing insults at Heinrich, holding his hand with the knife in the air indecisively as if he was afraid of something, trembling and shaking in all his body. This was the man Heinrich had thrown on the street at that tavern. Heinrich was a strong and cool man. The only weapon he had was a cleaned thin tree branch he used to hold during his morning walks. He watched silently the nervous sweating armed man and very speedily lifted his hand and stroke strongly the back of the knife holding hand causing him so much pain that the knife was left to glide on the ground. There was a fight for the knife. Then not clear what was. In a jiffy the attacker was there lifeless, his heart pierced with his own knife.

It was one of those things, so serious to shake any man in the world. No one around. Heinrich walked hastily to the town leaving the dead man untouched where he fell. He thought, he would have to get out of town and fast. May be he could go to Italy or to France and see about bringing the family to him. In those times it was enough to get out of town to disappear for good and be forgotten too. He went straight to his delicate wife Rosa and told her the story. She gave him all the money she had saved during these few meager years and he handed her the keys of his shop and away he went. He disappeared for good alright and he never came any sign of life from him and nobody heard anything about him. The police never bothered the family and did not seem to suspect Heinrich for this killing.

<sup>about</sup>  
~~Some~~ eight years later, in the early's 1900's, when the children Victor and <sup>Lisa</sup> were already married and had their own families, <sup>it</sup> happened that Victor an evening in a small tavern overheard ~~that~~ a man telling ~~a~~ about a husky peculiar foreigner in his fifties with wild unkempt hair and a beard, speaking in a broken Greek, going from place <sup>to place</sup> in the Peloponense and around the town Calamata, offering to repair watches for a meal and more for wine and he slept in the barns and the streets. He was often drunk, people teased and laughed at him, kids tortured him cruelly. Nobody knew his name or where he came from.



Victor jumped on that man begging for information , bombarding him with questions. Yes, it was in Calamata that he saw last that man, about eight months before. He had seen him a few times during the last years, all around that town of Calamata. No, ~~they~~<sup>he</sup> did not know where he could be by now. It was a revelation coming too late. Victor immediately went and for weeks roamed the area asking about the "drunkard watchmaker". Everyone seemed to know him, but nobody could tell where he was. As they ~~learned~~<sup>learned</sup>, this young man was searching for his father, everyone wanted to help to locate him, but nobody could anymore. Heinrich had disappeared for the second time and with a heavy heart ~~Victor~~<sup>Victor</sup> returned empty handed to Athens. He could not even locate the place he was buried, It was certain he had died.

Victor and Lisa remained troubled with this tragedy up to the end of their lives. Heinrich Weinberg was my maternal grandfather. From what I heard, he must have been an interesting man. I regret not knowing more about him and I wish I would have met him. After coming to Greece, he was a lonely and unhappy man.

As the past becomes more remote and it is covered with more dust of oblivion, life adjusts to the living present and looks forward to the vibrating future. As Heinrich went out of the picture, his wife Rosa and the two teenaged children worked hard to create roots and progress. By now Victor was a good bookbinder earning full wages. Lisa, fifteen years old helped always mother in knitting and embroidering. It was hard work which gave low earnings.

In the fall of 1895, we find Lisa working, of all places, at the umbrella factory of Mr. Simonidis, sewing the conical pieces of satin fabric together. Who had placed her there? Was it Leon who certainly must have known the family Weinberg as neighbors in the Jewish neighborhood?

88 In 1896, when these two married together, the girl was just sixteen and Leon thirty three or so. The family needed very much a man. Victor, eighteen at that time, was not much of a family head. An extrovert, he had friends, liked to get out, theater, tavern or night serenading under windows. He gave a good part of his earnings to his mother and he was a good boy. In exchange to that, he wanted to be left to live his life as he liked it.

The marriage was apparently not very fitting. For one the groom was over double the age of the bride who was so innocent as not to realize it. Mama Rosa, as everyone in the neighborhood called her, never trusted fully Leon. Instinctively she felt how volatile he was, not knowing what he really wanted in life. But Leon was a good man, with a good reputation and the most important, did not ask for a dowry, ~~and what is more,~~ ~~he~~ knew a trade, a rare thing among young people in the neighborhood. Why did he marry when he was set all the years for emigration? ~~And~~ The age of thirty three was rather advanced, ~~for that,~~ especially taking a girl of sixteen.

Soon after the marriage, Leon opened a small umbrella repair shop in one of the main thoroughfares, the Hermes Street. It was the first small workshop in Athens for umbrellas repair. They rented an other apartment to be all together. Victor was not yet married. One year later, in 1897, they had their first child. Everyone was happy and the neighborhood rejoiced the "Brith Mila" the circumcision ceremony. It was puzzling that the boy was not named after his paternal grandfather that is Pinhas, as it was the custom for a "Behor", a first born son.

They named him Daniel which was also the name of the Godfather, Mr. Daniel Rotschild. This man originated from Germany, but I don't know if he was related to the famous family of financiers Rotschild. He was aristocratic and well educated and man who did not lack wealth. He was very friendly with Leon since years and seeing him often. He had a commercial business of some kind in Athens. I saw this man much later, when he was well advanced in years and I was impressed with his nobility and kindness.

Victor married a couple of years later a Greek Jewish girl named Hannah. In 1903 they had their first boy. Of course they named him Errico which made him an other Heinrich Weinberg. Meantime Leon und Liza had a second boy. This time they gave him the name of Pinhas. Two years later again a boy came along and they named him Errico. Again in two years a forth child appeared, a girl. She received the name Rosa. It was in 1903.

The family started to get crowded, but it was only the beginning of more crowding. This business with repairing umbrellas is peculiar. More people now used umbrellas, but the problem was that it did not rain all the time, only during the rain season which is in late Fall and some more in spring. People use to rush to <sup>repair</sup> since long broken umbrellas only when it rained and they needed them. As it poured from the skies, they formed a line begging and pressing for immediate repair. In the rainless months it was no business. Very few ladies had a parasol for sun protection. Strangely enough, <sup>the long bearded</sup> ~~only~~ priests had umbrellas against the hot sun in summer, but they were few and terribly poor. In summer Leon made some peddling, mostly selling repaired umbrellas left unclaimed or made of cannibalized broken pieces.

Leon must have passed by opportunities for betterment. Other people of industry put the foundation of success in those times. At the turn of the century, there was promise and challenge everywhere and new winds were blowing and peace was reigning all around. The world was on the road of opulence. Many countries, including Greece <sup>had</sup> ~~had~~ coined money cut of gold. It was a special era with all the breakthrough in technology, sciences and arts. New theories of brotherhood and social order in the life of man were in the offing. Life went on for this family. They lived in a very modest apartment in a very old house with a dark backyard with four or five families living in the <sup>small</sup> ~~apartments~~ in it, which made fiction inevitable. They did not



have more than what it was necessary to survive but they <sup>elementary</sup> lacked space and many facilities without which life to day is considered unbearable or substandard.

Mama Rosa took care of the little children and most of the household as Lisa worked as hard as it could be to earn a few drachmas. Sometimes she even made the laundry for other people which it was the hardest work of all and made all by hand. Leon, year in year out, stood on the same position, feverishly working during the rain season and daydreaming during the meager dry months. He was not a bad father. When he had money, he cared much for the family and when he had no money, Lisa was the one. She became a shrewd manipulator in finances and acquired the ability to take the most out of money. Several friends frequented the shop of Leon, but he rarely sat with them in a tavern evening. The Jewish community of Athens had nearly tripled since fifteen years before when Leon came. After the brief war with Turkey in 1897, which added some territories to Greece, many people arrived from Turkey getting away from the increasing terror of the Abdul Hamid regime. ~~Under the free~~ ~~in Greece, the population for the entire Jewish community~~. A new big Synagogue, with all the <sup>auxiliary</sup> ~~secondary~~ facilities, was built and inaugurated in the Melidoni Street, a central spot in Athens. It still exists intact.

Now we are in the historical year of 1905. Lisa was pregnant to her fifth. The oldest one, <sup>Samuel</sup> was a little over eight. It was an unusually cold winter that month of December, the penetrating freezing wind blowing from the sea. Heating and food were the sharpest problems of the poor multitudes. The apartment of the Sevillias had only three rooms, ~~and~~ a very small kitchen <sup>and</sup> ~~with~~ no bathing ~~place~~ tub or shower. The place grew to be smaller and smaller as new babies arrived. Mama Rosa was very busy and Lisa up to the end worked with that perennial handknitting on order. The worst time it seemed to be to have a birth.

Christmas approached. Aside of the freezing, the sanitary conditions for a birth in that house were in comparison nil. Nobody had ever heard that a baby was born any place else than home. You could make it as feasible as possible. Mama Rosa had a passion for cleanliness. The badly fitting doors and windows were <sup>thickly</sup> insulated with rags to prevent <sup>some of</sup> the cold coming in. For heating they had a low thin iron sheet contraption in round shape, <sup>and three feet</sup> a kind of recipient with a fifteen to twenty inches opening. A small heap of coal was constantly burning in it. To get warm, you had to sit <sup>very</sup> near to it. Anyway it warmed the room, the one room it was. From time to time new coal was added. But you could not use it during the night to avoid poisoning by the carbon monoxide emitted from the coal. So the contraption was put outside in the backyard every evening. One of the first tasks in winter for the woman of a house was to clean the "Mangali", as that contraption was called, from the ashes and make a new fire. Everyone was elated to see it coming <sup>into the house</sup> every morning, coal glowing.

Christmas eve. The big birth pains were there and so was the midwife and a couple of neighborhood women. The four ~~little~~ children Daniel, Pinhas, Errico and Rosa, aged now from eight to nearly three, were fed and put all together on a mattress on the floor to sleep. In the other room was Leon with a couple of friends sipping coffee and waiting. Just after midnight the baby glided out and into the world of the valey of tears, without fuss and in the easiest manner. Just a cry and the men in the next room learned about the big event. So happened that Christmas day of 1905, which was really not a Christmas after all. It was January seventh of 1906 after the Universal Gregorian calendar the world is living with.

94 It was a healthy tiny boy. ~~There~~ <sup>me</sup> an exceptionally cold day and they took pains to keep ~~him~~ warm. The days passed and they looked forward to the circumcision on the eighth day, but there was a problem. The rabbi who could do it, was gravely ill with pneumonia or something like that. How to locate and other Mohel or circumciser in some other town and bring him to Athens, in the midst of that winter, and it would be costly. The newborn boy, all his life later was lucky in times of crisis. It happened just so that the rabbi of Volos, a port town some two hundred fifty miles from Athens, was in town for a visit which he extended because <sup>of</sup> the snow blizzards clogging the highways and putting the railroad out of business, made impossible his leaving.

When he heard the story, he accepted to perform the circumcision without remuneration. He inquired only if the parents would have any objection to give to the baby his <sup>father's</sup> name. Curiously, they had not yet agreed on a name and they were so thankful to that rabbi <sup>and</sup> ~~that~~ they readily accepted his wish. The circumcision was performed home, in the room where the "parida" or new mother ~~had~~ the birth. It was a hasty affair with no particular celebration. A neighbor played the Godfather, a white pillow on his lap and on it the baby, the incision, the cry, the drops of wine in his mouth, the prayer and the customary wishes all around. Then business as usual.

They gave him the rabbi's <sup>father</sup> name which was that of prophet's Eliyahu or Elias. ~~I was that boy and~~ I always liked that name. In Greece, ~~certainly for practical purposes~~ they don't give any particular middle name to boys. Always it is the name of his father. So I was Elias Leon Sevilla and still I am.

As for my circumcision <sup>ez</sup> ~~for~~, I met him only once in life and it is indelible in my memory. I was fourteen or fifteen years old. Passover morning getting out of the Synagogue and still in the backyard my father pointed at an elderly short very scholarly looking man and said to me: This is the rabbi who circumcised you. Go and say him hello. I did so. I had heard the story of my circumcision and thought, this <sup>is the</sup> ~~that~~ rabbi? He stood for a moment silent trying to remember. My father remin-



ded him certain details and the face of the rabbi brightened. Yes, I remember. It was a very cold winter. So, you are that tiny creature and look at you, unbelievable. If I knew, I would have tried to be at your Bar Mitzvah. It would be nice. I have two daughters, but no son. Oh yes, I have three grandchildren, all of them boys and one of them bears my and your name. It is a good name, our greatest prophet and for that you have the responsibility to be a good, a very good man. He looked very dignified. As I bent to kiss his hand, he put its open palm on my head murmuring the traditional "Yivarechecha Veyismereha", He will bless you and he will watch upon you". I was moved as my father and the rabbi ~~was~~ were.

Year succeeded year and more children were born in our family. After me, in 1908, came Moshe and two years later the second girl, Victoria. Four years later, in 1914 the third girl, Sara after Leon's mother. Then an other girl named Esther because she was born on Purim day 1918 and three years later the tenth child, <sup>Leah</sup> again a girl. It was the magic number, no more children in our family. May be age was the real stopper. My father was already nearing sixty and my mother was already forty two. It was alright, five boys and five girls, of which the <sup>late</sup> four were in a row the youngest. But too much is too much for a man who insists that the best mission in life is to repair umbrellas up to the very end of his life and at the same time to have ten children who needed something more than merely looking at them. The balancing link was the great strength of Lisa. My mother was a strong woman.

*In addition to those ten children there were*  
~~But there were more children than that if you count the natural abortions~~  
miscarriages. It must have been five or six of them mostly caused by overwork or lifting weights or the total lack of pre-natal care. I vaguely remember having heard about one incurred at the end of a heavy laundry day. Mother bending all day <sup>wooden</sup> on a trough rubbing strongly <sup>with</sup> both hands all kinds of garments <sup>bed sheets and blankets</sup> while at the side a round caldron precariously standing on bricks, wood burning underneath to warm water constantly taken off and filled in. This started at early dawn up to late afternoon. By the end the garments had to dry on a rope and as soon as dried to be replaced with wet ones. It was quite a labor for a harassed mother of so many children *and took an other day with the ironing taking a third one.*

I must have been six years old or so. A sunday morning <sup>Father</sup> took me with him and we went to the Jewish cemetery, a half hour walk from our home. He had a shoe box under his arm. He selected carefully a spot along the external wall, took from the carton a rusty <sup>large</sup> spoon or a thing like that and dug a fifteen inch <sup>long</sup> hole into the ground. He took out from the box something wrapped in a newspaper sheet and put it into that hole. As the paper opened, I saw it was a human fetus <sup>roughly</sup> formed, hands, feet, face and everything. I was very shaken and could not understand where did it come from. Father murmured, it was a girl. Since then, always

up to this very time, when it happens to ~~see~~ <sup>lead at</sup> that cemetery, I wonder where must be that spot. Later I knew that whenever an abortion or miscarriage was in the Jewish neighborhood, <sup>and it was not rare;</sup> the fetus went into a hole outside the cemetery.

My father was a good provider and a generous man. Only that he did not earn enough during all the year to provide ~~enough~~ <sup>sufficiently</sup>. He took upon himself philosophically all kinds of small sacrifices as in a hot day denying himself a cold soft drink, making his own cigarettes with a primitive contraption ~~and~~ using the cheapest tobacco and things like that. I suspect, he rarely went to join his friends at the local tavern because this meant saving that small expense. When I first became aware of him, he was around fifty which was pretty old at that time. Tall, thin, ascetic looking, all the hair on his head cut to the roots, wearing a collar less shirt made of coarse cotton fabric. He had never a tie. He looked tired, resigned, harassed.

~~Were~~ Many people think fondly to the memories of their childhood. I know, mine ~~was~~ colorful, to say the least, a world never to exist again. It is not possible to describe it. Mother was the financial brains and this was recognized by my father. During the ~~crisis~~ <sup>affluent</sup> period of rains, mother found ~~ways~~ <sup>subtle</sup>, ~~mostly subtle~~, to take as much money as possible out of his hands. A part of the same money went back to my father during the lean months to pay his rent or to buy something. She was not stingy, but she saved every penny in every way. The greatest expense was in food and clothing for the many children. She applied everything in the book to feed adequately the large family with every penny counting. She made agreements with vegetable and fruit vendors to bring her in the evening all what remained unsold, bruised tomatoes, beaten apples, detached grapes and the like she bought at very low cost. The street vendors were glad to get rid of the stuff and had the satisfaction at the same time of helping little children to grow. She went to the nearby central meat and fish market to buy beef bones or lamb tripe and feet and let them simmer all night in a huge pot on a low coal fire. The main food was bread and everything, even pastries, was eaten with a lot of bread. Father bought them in loaves of about five pounds each. If a child was hungry in the afternoon, he got a thick slice of that good firm bread, well springled with olive oil, salt and pepper on it. Delicious. Meat was rather rare, may be once a week, but there were tasty ways of cooking eggplants, okra, green or dried beans, cabbage, spinach with rice, potatoes as well as to fry fish or make very good fish soups with lemon. Chicken was the greatest luxury and the rarest in the menu. My mother, as all mothers in the neighborhood, was an excellent cook.

Clothing and shoes were always a problem. Some garments, especially for the little girls, were sewn by mother, or bought in the flea market and mended or arranged to fit the next line of age. I remember, the first new pair of shoes I put



on my feet, it was at the age of eleven. Someone, shortly before Passover, in memory of his recently deceased father, decided that about twenty kids around my age needed new shoes. We were put on line, brought to a shoemaker who <sup>measured</sup> ~~looked at~~ our feet and on Passover eve we had them <sup>shoes</sup> ~~new~~. I remember vividly how proud and happy I was with that pair of shoes. All the shoes I <sup>had worn</sup> ~~had~~ (up to then, and for years after <sup>older</sup> ~~were~~) were worn before by one or two of my brothers. Somehow, no one among us, at any time, remained without shoes or went bare footed in the street as many children of gentile poor families did.

All the kids in our Jewish neighborhood were clean and neat even if mostly their garments were visibly mended, patched or even not fitting. Cleanliness was a sort of collective responsibility among the mothers in our street who were also close friends jumping constantly to assist each other in all kinds of minor emergencies.

Uncle Victor had three children, two boys, Errico born in 1903, Jacob in 1908 and a girl, Rosa in 1910. Up to the end of his life he was a bookbinder and with the same employer he had started with. They had a new bookbinding factory in the island of Crete and Victor was transferred there to manage it for a dozen of years. He was a good man and he liked me very much. He never really changed since his youth. Extrovert, vivacious, joking, many friends and very many evenings drinking the Retsina wine in a tavern. He remained very close to my mother and to us up to the end of his life. His family was the only one we were related in Greece and the only relative we, the Seville children, <sup>had</sup> ~~had~~ ever knew. By now, some twenty five or thirty years after our father <sup>had</sup> ~~had~~ arrived in Greece, we were totally cut from his numerous family in Turkey. We did not know anything about them and they did not know anything about us.

THE FAMILY AND THE GIANT

During these early years, Mama Rosa was the real hero. She cared very much for Lisa and her seven children aged one to fourteen and she <sup>still</sup> was up to a degree distrustful of Leon. Everything in the family was first discussed among the two women. In spite of all, the relations between Leon and his mother in law were good. He recognized in his heart that without that old and so energetic woman, the going of this household would be problematic. This woman was the first up in the morning and the last to go to bed at night. She took care of the many things like making the fire, <sup>S</sup>washing the children, mending garments and socks or washing dishes. She never rested. Every free hour she had, it was for knitting for others and all the money she earned went to the treasury of Lisa.

In spite of my very young age I have a recollection of her. In 1911 I was five and a half years old. I dreaded her, washing my face every morning because she rubbed ~~it~~ and scrubbed it so strongly while I tried to get out of her hands. And always she said the same in her broken Greek or sometimes in Italian; "you've to be clean, very clean, always clean". She did not let anyone touching food or even saying good morning without having first washed his hands and face. Up to this very day immediately after getting out of bed, I must do the same. Otherwise I feel miserable.

I remember still vividly that late afternoon in November of 1911. <sup>that of</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>two months my sixth birthday</sup> The old woman was in bed ill. She was talking with my mother in Italian. In our home only Italian and Greek was spoken and in the street it was much in Spanish. My mother gave me a coin and a water glass and told me to go to the nearby grocer, Vasily to tell him to put in the glass Samos sweet wine and give him the coin. As strange as it may seem, I remember her exact words she repeated to me; "don't spill it out, be careful". Vassily, a giant of a man in his fifties, liked children. As he saw me he bent and asked jovially: Hey, "Lizopoulo", Lisa's kid, what is it? He took the coin, ~~and~~ filled my glass with the Samos wine. ~~and~~ I also remember well, I walked slowly and very much cared not to spill the wine. Grandmother took the glass in the one hand and a hard zwieback or rusk made of wheat bread roasted slightly in the oven, dipping it into the wine to soften it. That was her dinner.

In later years I spoke with my <sup>older</sup> ~~brothers~~ <sup>and sister Rosa</sup> about our grandmother and learned many details I didn't know from personal experience. Rosa was <sup>two and half</sup> years older than I, ~~Emilia 4 and half and Pina nearly 7 years older~~. Anyway, after the wine I have a gap in memory but I also remember vividly this:

The four youngest were put in the next room on a mattress on the floor and were asleep. There was no door between the two rooms and they had hanged a blanket



to cut the light and the noise. I still have this before my eyes. I was awakened, walked dizzily and parted the hanging blanket. I noticed the elongated body in the white sheet on the floor and the two big candles burning <sup>and the many people</sup>. My brother Daniel saw me, took gently my hand, brought me back to where I came from. Liachico, he said, using the name my father called me, lay down, sleep. I don't recall anything else. It was the heaviest blow in the life of my mother. She lost more than a mother. She lost a foundation, the main support in her life. Then she faced the world alone and she remained forever alone.

As it usually was, the "Behor" Daniel was the main hope for better things in a family like ours. There was a school in Athens named "Istituto Italiano" in an impressive building belonging to the Italian government, for the propagation of the Italian culture. Enrollement was free, at least for families of unadequate means. Daniel studied there a few years, I don't know how many. Aside of Italian, they taught also Greek. It seems that there was a sizable Italian colony in town, because the "Istituto" had often more students than it could handle. It was known for its higher standards. I believe, they taught ~~there~~ up to the sixth or the eighth grade. ~~I don't know how many grades Daniel was taught there.~~ He was an avid reader of books. The great difficulty in those times was that there was no book lending library. You had either to buy a book or to go to one of the couple libraries in town, sit there and read it. There were many outlets of used books in moderate cost. You could buy a book, read it, then exchange it for an other book by paying a "difference". The most business was in such exchanges. Daniel had now to apprentice something for a future and in the process earn some money. He heard so often people saying to his mother and father; how fortunate you are, the child-rend will grow up, work and make life real easy for you. Daniel had that ambition <sup>I don't know what (or if) but I remember</sup> his first job ~~was~~ a peculiar one and it was so: Electricity was a rare thing at that time. Lighting in buildings and streets was by gas since decades. The gas company was established and owned by the British and the French and was adequately organized. In Athens they had their very visible installations extracting gas from coal, the only gas they could have. In each house they installed an approximately twenty inches <sup>round</sup> closed contraption measuring the ~~consumption~~ consumption and it was called the "gas meter". ~~It was round and~~ <sup>round</sup> in its middle was a small <sup>window</sup> glass through which you could read how many cubic feet of gas were consumed.

I was fascinated watching in the evening the "gas lighter", the man who put the flame on the gas light on the long poles in the streets. Holding a sort of a long wooden lance on the upper edge of which there was a little flame, he switched the gas <sup>on with it</sup> ~~at the base of the pole blowing the light~~ and he made light. He appeared <sup>again</sup> ~~at dusk and~~ at dawn to switch off the lights. He worked with dexterity. It was a spectacle for us tots.

The gas meters in every building and house was always in an accessible place and was locked. At the upper part there was a small attached cover. For a reason I don't know, once a month the supervisor came, he noted down the consumption figure he read through the small glass window and he had to put a little water <sup>under</sup> ~~through~~ the cover in the upper part. At the same time he distributed the bill for the last month and often he also collected the money if possible. Otherwise the consumer had to go to the company office to pay.

They called that man gas inspector and he was considered to be a respected official. He had with him a young boy holding a water can similar to the one for watering flowers and his mission was to keep his can always full with water and properly water the gas meters. He had to know where were the faucets located in each neighborhood.

I don't know how, Daniel acquired the position of a gas meter waterer, a coveted position at that time for a boy with strong feet. A teenager is supposed to have strong feet. They started early in the morning <sup>at early afternoon</sup> and ~~before dark~~ he was free to go home which was unique in any other employment. ~~The~~ The wages were better than elsewhere. What he could hope, was that one day he could become a gas inspector in his own right, with a bit of luck.

Daniel was lucky that his inspector was a good man. He was impressed with Daniel and more because he always had something to read when they took a rest or a break for a meal, which was every couple of hours. The two were together since nearly two years. Daniel once told to the man, he <sup>liked to</sup> ~~thought~~ ~~about the possibility of~~ getting trained in accountancy, only he did not know where and how. The man wanted to help, but he too did not know how. He did his best, namely spoke about the boy at the company's office and praised him greatly. It happened that they had some difficulty to have efficient young people and they accepted to train him themselves, if they found him suitable. To Daniel's surprise, a nice morning he was called at the big office, tested in correct writing, some arithmetic and understanding. A little knowledge of self-taught French he had, helped. He was hired on the spot with a good salary. His inspector was the happiest. He said, he saved the boy from the streets for all his life, in all kinds of weather and wished him well. <sup>Daniel</sup> ~~Leon~~ was very thankful.

It was something jumping to the accountancy office of a big prestigious company. It was something. To be <sup>working</sup> in the offices of one of the very few companies and banks in that time, or even in a governmental office, automatically gave to a man an aura of respectability, of achievement. It was much more for a boy of sixteen. He <sup>became overnight</sup> ~~was~~ the pride of our family and the community. Mothers in our street were jealous. It was a first for a Jewish boy in the town of Athens.



Daniel resembled physically to our father. Delicate features, dark blond complexion, slender and alert, especially now he tried to dress as well as he could, always clean, polished shoes and everything. He <sup>was</sup> ~~stayed~~ humble, polite and very protective to the family. Now more than ever <sup>he</sup> was the hope and the expectation for everyone. ~~Very~~ <sup>Very</sup> good against me, ~~and~~ he was amused when I talked about something I had read somewhere. We had in common that we both liked so much to read. I was <sup>then</sup> ~~just~~ <sup>nine</sup> years old. He tried to teach me, ~~something~~. I was fascinated with reading <sup>and</sup> one of my recollections was that I read in the newspaper, it was a rush by collectors, to have a new issue of stamps marked with the date of 12.12.12 that is 1912. <sup>I was in the first grade in school.</sup> ~~Then I went to Daniel~~ and wanted to know why people collect stamps.

~~I lived in the next street from ours lived~~ <sup>Since Long a widow.</sup> an aged retired teacher, ~~She owned an old house with a~~ <sup>below</sup> paved backyard and quite a number of rooms all around it, of which some she rented to a family of <sup>her</sup> relatives to her while she kept several for herself. There she had a private elementary school. I guess, she did not need any licence for that. She was the only teacher there and taught <sup>the first three grades.</sup> ~~only three classes~~. She was a good teacher and it was a kind of quality education. My father brought me there in September and enrolled me for three Drachmas a month which was some money for us. I don't know ~~what~~ he did that. He could enroll me as well in the public school for nothing. He kept me there for three years and I was the only of his children in a private school. I was never in my life in any other day school or any public school. It must have been a <sup>financial</sup> sacrifice for <sup>him</sup> my father.

Her <sup>first</sup> name was Kyra (Mrs.) Assimo, ~~and it was her first name as she was known all around.~~ She liked me very much and for the next twenty years she lived, every time I passed there, long after she closed her school, I used to stop and chat with her. I was grieved when I heard suddenly, she passed away. She was a good woman and to her I owe the <sup>only</sup> foundation of the little formal education I acquired.

The education was not compulsory in those times. Boys of numerous poor families reaching their tenth year became potential earners ~~at the same~~ apprenticing a trade. My brothers Errico and Moshe were three years in ~~school~~ and then both apprenticed in leather articles which became their occupation in their adult years. Errico was at the "Istituto Italiano" while Moshe went to the Public school. Pinhas had the problem that he could not learn though he was in school for several years with interruptions. He <sup>finally</sup> made three or four grades and he only succeeded to somehow be able to read the newspaper and may be to write a letter.

In any case, in our world the <sup>main</sup> gate to adulthood was through peddling. <sup>Some kind of</sup> Even one, even if he was apprenticing a trade, peddled part time. Very few of the boy

in our neighborhood went through childhood without peddling something. My mother bought wholesale peanuts in the shell, wetted and salted them and let them roast at the local bakery. ~~The~~ <sup>We</sup> children ~~we~~ took them in little baskets and peddled them in public events, in parks or to people sitting in the open coffeehouses on the pavements or even taverns. It was an auxiliary earning for a family and it went invariably in the hands of the mother. May be an exception, but I don't recall Daniel <sup>ever</sup> peddling, ~~May~~ be because he was by eight years older than I.

Peddling required imagination and had to be adjusted to a given situation. In summer parades in the main streets and events of all kinds in the huge stadion or the adjacent large Zappion park. It was hot, people were thirsty and no water accessible. We kids bought a box of sweet jelly pieces called "Turkish Delight". We cut the square pieces in still smaller pieces and sprinkled them with the same sugar powder in the box. Each one of us had a "stamna" that is water recipient of brown clay with a protruding belly and a handle, a kind of large pitcher. Somehow the water cooled a bit there. ~~We~~ <sup>we</sup> had a moderate size water glass with ~~46~~ and shouted around ~~our~~ wares. For a coin ~~it~~ <sup>we</sup> served people with a piece of "Loukoumi" Turkish delight and a glass of water. For any more water, the man had to pay. Then ~~it~~ poured a little water into the glass to wash it, or pretended to do so, and it was ready for the next customer. The water in the "stamna" after about thirty glasses sold, was exhausted and there was our secret. Next to the stadion and Zappion, there was (and still exists) a large walled plot for athletic exercises and there was a faucet with water. We would run to it through a small opening in a wall spot fill the "stamna" and we were again in business. When the "loukoumi" pieces were ~~all sold~~ <sup>all sold</sup> ~~exhausted~~ <sup>offered</sup>, we ~~could~~ only water. There I learned what an advantage is when you know something the others don't. We knew where was that faucet and how to get to it.

We peddled everything under the sun that could give us a profit, even if it was only for one or a few times. Later, Errico worked evenings making small goat leather wallets with stamping in hot of the Acropolis. We peddled them around. An other time it was worry beads in the coffee houses and taverns. Myself, my main peddling period was between ten and fifteen years of age.

I don't remember if I started earning wages as a worker immediately after I "finished" school at Mrs. Assimo's. Anyway, it must have been before my tenth birthday, they put me at a shoe making workshop <sup>sublet</sup> ~~with a tail~~. I recall, they paid me half drachma a day which was the equivalent of ten cents in 1915. My main duty was to straighten nails with a hammer. Before sewing the soles, they nailed them and after they took off the nails to be reused because nails were money. There was always a tin box full of crooked nails. They hated to see me catching my breath after a task. Someone shouted: What are you doing? Why don't you straighten nails?



An other of my "duties" was to bring the upper parts <sup>of shoes</sup> to be sewn in the "machine" half a mile far from my work place. There was a kind of <sup>way</sup> shop where women sat before leather sewing machines and sewed the upper parts ~~of shoes~~ sent with boys like me from various ~~work-shops~~. ~~Waiting~~ <sup>often</sup> there to take the pieces sewn back ~~and~~ I remember that we played marbles or chatted, ~~sometimes~~ <sup>often</sup> staying longer than we were supposed to. Sometimes a customer needed urgent delivery of the shoes he bought and they sent me with them to homes, ~~sometimes~~ <sup>often</sup> late in the evening, ~~and for that~~ I received a tip if the man was generous. Generally, everything for me was rush, rush.

My education up to then was on a level <sup>to</sup> the majority of kids around ~~me~~ <sup>level</sup> as the acceptable limit, three years primary. With that you could read and write and it was enough. But not for me. I told so to my father, ~~who at that time was a~~ ~~recessed resigned man~~. There was one only alternative, the night school Parnassos. Father brought me ~~once~~ there to register <sup>me</sup> in the third grade and I remember well that evening when, ~~after registration,~~ <sup>he</sup> left ~~me alone there~~ in the class and I felt so helpless. He never came at that school to inquire about me all the years I learned there. It was so with all the other fathers, <sup>Nobody was supposed to come and inquire about his kid.</sup> ~~but my father approached learning.~~ Puzzling.

My employer agreed to let me <sup>go</sup> ~~leave~~ at 6 o'clock afternoon to ~~go~~ <sup>be</sup> to school. After six or eight months I had an other job because they paid more and I was sick and tired straightening nails. Nearly all the fingers of my left hand were blue from missed hammer beatings. Up to now I <sup>am</sup> ~~became~~ an expert in straightening nails, ~~I don't like it~~. I worked for a few months in leather articles at the place Errico was employed, then I became a taylor but I did not like sewing, then for a while in a bookbinding shop on the recommendation of my uncle Victor, then in a department store. I was restless and could not take roots at a place and a trade. I found myself at ease only in school. The teaching was compact and <sup>if</sup> you put enough attention and homework, you could learn ~~as well as in the day school~~ <sup>they</sup> ~~in Greece~~ <sup>have</sup> ~~was and still is~~ a Department of Education and the curriculum of every school class in the country is under the control of the Government which also establishes the height of salaries, the teaching hours and pays the teachers or repairs the schools. The teaching material was more densely compiled for the ~~time~~ <sup>night</sup> school, without eliminating ~~anything~~ <sup>much</sup> of what was taught in day schools. Of course, in my school they were a bit more lenient in grading the student performance, but it was still very rigid in comparison to the present <sup>educational standards</sup> ~~standards of primary education~~. At least between ten to twenty percent of the students did not pass to the higher class and had to submit to new tests in September. Some did not pass <sup>again</sup> ~~and~~ and had to study in the same grade for an other year.

Those were bad years for Greece during the First World war. King Constantine

was for the Germans and Premier Venizelos was for the allies. By the end they had split Greece, they made two out of one with a Government of the King in Athens and an other Government of Venizelos in Salonica which, with the aid of the British and the French, <sup>thoroughly</sup> blockaded the King's continental Greece so ~~well~~, that food in his <sup>area</sup> ~~residence~~ <sup>very scarce</sup> ~~became~~ <sup>what</sup> ~~the street~~. It was so bad that we kids ran wildly ~~to~~ <sup>in</sup> ~~to~~ supplement ~~the things~~ we had at home and often we ate things we should not.

Many kids my age died at that time. I did better. I acquired only what they called "belly typhus". Up to this very day I remember vividly that period. I did not know and they told me later. For several months I dangled between life and death. We were near the bottom of our poverty at that time. <sup>all of us</sup> ~~We~~ lived in two rooms only in a huge backyard which was unpaved as ~~the~~ <sup>rooms</sup> were, the floor being simply ~~unpaved~~ earth dirt. There was no kitchen and a primitive toilet was in the backyard. ~~and~~ There were 8 children of which one gravely ill. I remember the family eating at a table just along my bed and a couple of them sitting on my bed for lack of chairs and space, while I was in high fever and had hallucinations. I could not eat anything and I was always in fever and terribly thin. I don't remember of any doctor visiting me. In times of high fever which was often, I had the notion that someone was pushing me in the back. They put chairs before the bed with weights on them, that I don't fall out as it happened a couple of times. Or I saw all the objects around me taking much bigger proportions in size than they had, that is a pencil became a ~~large~~ wooden beam, a spoon seemed to me ~~ten~~ times bigger. When I touched such objects I understood that it was only a hallucination.

It is strange, I don't remember anyone of the family at that time, except my mother. She was always there trying to feed me some invigorating soup made for me or making me <sup>for all</sup> sip the yellow camomile tea she sweetened excessively. It was considered a miracle ~~I was~~ pulled out of ~~this~~. I was transparently thin and so for many years and in my adulthood I was always underweight. People predicted that I will anyway not live long. One told <sup>me</sup> that if I live to be forty, I will be an old man. I survived it admirably. I was never again sick in all the decades up to now and I was never in hospital, I had never an operation and I had never to take a medicine except aspirin for a casual toothache, ~~and~~ I don't remember <sup>ever</sup> having had a headache. To that I was and am an exception to all my brothers and sisters.

I studied in Parnassos for four years, to the sixth grade. I continued to change places of work. Once ~~it~~ was a messenger at a Bank, or staying with father to help him and peddling during the lean months, in the offices of an insurance company, again in a textile store and so on and so forth. It <sup>seemed to be</sup> ~~must have been~~ a repetition of the apprenticeships of my father when he was my age. The difference



is that I, at age twelve or so, was deciding where to work, when to quit and where to start again, I went to school <sup>solely</sup> on my ~~own~~ <sup>own</sup> initiative, ~~I~~ got out of home early in the morning and return<sup>d</sup> late evening, between nine and ten o'clock, ~~and~~ In winter <sup>especially</sup> it was very late ~~and~~ for a boy my age. I gave all my wages to mother. Nearly all of my own money went to used books. At all times I had something to read with me, much of which was police or naive romantic stories. If I had something very interesting to read ~~which~~ <sup>and</sup> could not wait, I would simply sit down under any light on my way and read after school. For the homework, the only available opportunity was after I returned home, <sup>Late dinner found on the table.</sup> ~~and~~ Everyone was sleeping.

Those were colorful years. I was always the only Jewish kid in my class. One of the subjects was religion for an hour once a week. The teacher asked me to leave if I wanted, but I never wanted. It was history for me and I was ~~always~~ interested in history, ~~all my life~~. Once a week they had callisthenics and it was always in the last hour of the evening and each class at an other evening. Parnassos was at a central point of the town, the St. George Karytsi square and in the school yard there was not space enough for exercises. A particular ~~exercise~~ instructor was for this. The kids were aligned sparsely, the instructor on the pavement making the movements and the students repeating them. At that time there were no ~~automotive~~ cars, only a few horse coaches and if it happened one to pass, the coachman was very careful. Sometimes a few passersby stood at the opposite pavement before the Church watching silently the spectacle, over fifty little children exercising in the street <sup>that</sup> late evening. I don't know of what value it was, the little boys after a ten <sup>or twelve</sup> hour ~~of~~ hard work and three hours school, ~~mostly~~ hungry waiting to go home to eat. I was not a good student in everything. I disliked mathematics, may be the only subject I disliked.

The family was now in a better financial shape. Mother collected ~~nearly~~ everything the boys earned and this included now Moshe who passed the ten years of age mark and apprenticed also leather articles. Rosa, <sup>Sister</sup> ~~who was two years and a half older than I,~~ was apprenticing by a well known seamstress. Nobody knew how much money Mama had and ~~what~~ <sup>(did with)</sup> she ~~disposed~~ it. We knew that she bought continually dowry articles, bedspreads, garments and the like, some of them several times and kept them in two big wooden trunks. Only she knew what was inside. I don't remember a time mother was not very busy or she had any spare time for anyone of us individually. The only exception was Rosa and they were inseparable.

It was the year 1918. The ninth child, a girl, Esther, was added to the family. Daniel was in the Army, but I will deal a little later with that. Errico by now earned full wages in his trade. Pinhas, the second born was somewhat mentally slow. He remained with father and learned his trade after failing in other

things. After Daniel quit the gas watering job and started at the company office, he succeeded putting Pinhas as the watering boy with the same inspector, but he could not hold the job for more than a year. Among other things he suffered chronically of periodical diarrhoea spells <sup>weakening</sup> ~~sickening~~ him greatly for a while. It plagued him all his life. He went to a public school for nearly four years and could only pass two classes. He was also at the night school Parnassos for <sup>a couple of</sup> ~~an other few~~ years with in between interruptions. ~~of one or two years~~. His last year in Parnassos was in his nineteenth year of age, the fourth grade which he did not pass <sup>and that was</sup> ~~and he~~ <sup>the end of his formal</sup> ~~finished with~~ education. Moshe finished the fourth grade of Parnassos and found that he had enough and needed no more.

Unbelievable and a surprise. Mother bought a building plot near the Acropolis. In one year she sold it with profit and bought a bigger one in Peristeri, in a then far neighborhood of Athens. She negotiated, she decided. She did not discuss it with anybody, may be only Rosa.

First World War came to an end. It was the war to end all wars as they said and everyone firmly believed. The northern Greece government of Venizelos ~~had succeeded well~~, transferred to Athens, <sup>sent</sup> ~~put~~ King Constantin in exile <sup>my</sup> ~~in Italy~~. I was in my last year at Parnassos, at the peak of education, the sixth grade, a sort of an one-eyed king among the blind. In the final tests I was good except for my mediocrity in mathematics. But it seems that in one subject I was better.

They gave us an assignment for home. To write about "What is happiness" in a couple of pages and bring <sup>it</sup> as a paper to school. Because I read much, I was good in writing, but what kind of subject is that for a <sup>thirteen</sup> ~~fourteen~~-year old boy? I tried to find something to write down, when I remembered the following incident

Greek troops fought in Macedonia together with the French against the Bulgarians and the Germans. The French cared <sup>for</sup> ~~about~~ their wounded and the Greeks had to transfer theirs to Athens <sup>the hospitals were</sup> ~~because there were the main facilities~~. But the transfer was the most difficult part of the operation. They were ~~mainly~~ transported from Thessaloniki in slow sailing ships, but how do you bring them to Athens, the last leg of five miles? The only solution were the tramways <sup>connecting Piraeus to</sup> ~~in line with~~ Athens. The heavily wounded were on stretchers on the tramway corridors while the others sat on the seats before the opened windows watching the crowd all the way and trying to discover <sup>some</sup> ~~any~~ friend or relative among it. ~~and~~ These wounded were some place on their body bandaged. It was a daily carnival, women running along the slow moving tramways crying, asking, shouting, trying to recognize someone. Some have heard about their own people, some not but they imagined. There were rumors not true or very true as it proved. The tramways were mobbed all the way by impatient crowds <sup>up to arrival at the hospitals</sup> ~~up to arrival at the hospitals~~.



I knew about this incident. In the next street to ours lived a Christian widow with a lot of children. Her two oldest sons were soldiers in Macedonia. One day she was notified that her first born was killed in action. In mourning, she said mass at the neighborhood church, the neighbors tried to console her. A usual event those days and she tried to accept it in her mind. One month later she was informed that her second son was wounded and nothing else. So, she went every day at the Hermes Street waiting for the tramways hoping to see her wounded son.

She saw him alright, but it was not her second son, he was the first one who was dead as they had said. There he was leaning on a window head bandaged, all smiling and unaware of what happened to his mother. She was overwhelmed. In one of the ~~frequent~~ frequent tramway stops, she knelt on the street making repeatedly the sign of the cross, praying, laughing, crying. She wanted to jump into the tramway, but the guard did not let her. So she ran along the slow going tramway up to the hospital, talking to her son who could not hear her because of the commotion and the noise. In a jiffy the entire neighborhood knew about the miracle, if it a miracle was. People streaming to her poor basement home bringing sweets and cakes, congratulating, going all together that evening to the Church to thank the almighty for the son's resurrection. Next morning early, she visited him at the hospital.

I wrote down the story ~~simple~~ as I knew it and did not make much of it. The graduation lists were put on the wall. My name was in. Then, on a Sunday morning the celebration took place in the huge second floor hall where the high social gatherings, lectures, art exhibitions and the like were arranged. Each of the classes sat together, the lowest starting from the back and the highest, the sixth grade in the front. In all we were <sup>about</sup> four ~~to five~~ hundred students, in my sixth class about <sup>fifty</sup> ~~seventy~~. On the very wide stage sitting ~~on chairs~~ <sup>the teachers</sup>, there were quite a number of prominent people, the management, the Archbishop of Athens, Government officials and a number of distinguished citizens and people who have studied in Parnassos and made <sup>it later</sup> ~~later~~ very good in life. I believe three of the latter awarded three scholarships to the ~~five~~ best students of the sixth grade. For us, sitting there and among such a gathering, was a splendor.

<sup>said</sup> Prayers, speeches, all festive atmosphere. Then a gentleman on the stage <sup>I did not hear.</sup> something and called a name. To my surprise, I saw Pinhas getting up from a <sup>couple</sup> ~~few~~ rows behind me and going to the stage. I did not know what was <sup>going on</sup>. As he <sup>was</sup> at the stage, the gentleman spoke with <sup>him</sup> ~~Pinhas~~ briefly and he <sup>returned</sup> ~~started going back~~ to his <sup>man</sup> ~~seat~~. Then the ~~gentleman~~ in the stage asked loudly. Is Elias Sevilla here? We want Elias Sevilla. There was no loudspeaker. I went to the ramp in owe and kissed the extended hand of the Archbishop. One of the people there named Mr. Dra-

gatsis, the president of the Parnassos council handed me an envelope with my name ~~on it~~. Several of the sitting gentlemen smiled at me and said something I did not hear. As I wanted to go, Mr. Dragatsis called me: Do you know something, your story is good but something is missing. Why don't you let that poor woman ~~to~~ get on the tramway to embrace her son? Why let her wait up to next morning? Isn't it cruel? But it ~~was~~ <sup>is</sup> not allowed, I murmured. You should make an exception, he replied. We are talking about happiness, don't we? Mr. Dragatsis, a middleaged man of great distinction, had his own private school in Athens, ~~may be~~ <sup>he was</sup> the most renowned in Greece and a highly known intellectual.

One hundred Drachmas were there in the envelope in crispy new five drachmas bills, the ~~equivalent~~ <sup>equivalent</sup> of twenty gold dollars. When I reached home at noon, they already knew. I handed the envelope to my mother. Every week, as I brought the money ~~my employer gave to me~~ <sup>I earned from work</sup>, I received from mother one drachma. Now she gave me one more.

In 1917 Daniel, twenty years old, was drafted in the army. After a short training he was sent to the Macedonian front where the battles raged. Time passed in anxiety and fear about ~~Daniel~~ <sup>him</sup>. We were alleviated when the war ended in the Fall of 1918. For us it was not so. In distant Russia a cruel civil war was waged between the red and the white Russians. The British, the French and others did not like the idea of the Bolsheviks winning and gathered an expeditionary corps to go and fight them. A greek Regiment (or was it a division?) was included. Daniel was in it. That expeditionary corps soon failed. ~~The multinational inexperienced regiments could not succeed.~~ They were dispersed and came back home. Daniel was in Bessarabia.

Meantime matters were not prospering for our family. The political situation was at its lowest. Great fanaticism among the parties, the Venizelistes and the monarchists ~~at~~ <sup>were</sup> at each others throat, people streaming from the provinces to Athens in search of security and livelihood. War had ravaged the Macedonian towns which could not be rebuilt for lack of funds and understanding. In Athens there was an acute housing crisis. Finding to rent a home you had first to be affiliated with the right political party ~~and~~ <sup>or</sup> have ample means.

in 1919, I don't know how, we were without an apartment. Under my father's umbrella shop was a wide basement, empty, but not fit for inhabiting, no kitchen, no toilet, only a faucet with water. No alternative, all of us, ~~seven~~ <sup>eight</sup> children and the parents went there to live. Upstairs, in the shop, there was a toilet and a space behind where you could make the laundry. It was a peculiar basement on a very central street and main thoroughfare with the noisy tramways passing constantly. About ~~five~~ <sup>four</sup> or ~~seven~~ <sup>five</sup> stone steps to the thick wooden door which had only a small win-



dow in its middle of about fifteen square inches. <sup>The door</sup> <sup>was</sup> <sup>always</sup> <sup>open</sup> <sup>because</sup> <sup>it</sup> <sup>was</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>only</sup> <sup>ventilation</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>place</sup>. There were an other <sup>ten or six more</sup> stone steps behind the door <sup>down</sup> to the basement which was at least ~~well~~ paved. My mother made three rooms out of it by separating <sup>it</sup> <sup>by</sup> hanging bedspreads to create some priva-  
te / c)

The main problem was the cooking. How do you feed <sup>ten</sup> ~~eleven~~ persons without a kitchen? As cooking was done with the use of coal and there was no adequate ventilation, it could not be done in the basement. The only solution was to cook in the street. My mother put a contraption used widely at the time on the second upper step of the basement. It was a version of the "Mangali" people used for heating, only narrower, stronger and higher. On it a large pot was put and left to boil, or you could also fry if you used a pan. It was strange to cook under the noses of the multitude of the passersby and mother had a lot of cooking to do. My mother was a woman of solutions.

In spring of 1919 suddenly Daniel appeared from nowhere, after nearly two years of absence. But what was that? We rubbed our eyes and with us the entire neighborhood. On his drab khaki uniform he wore the insignia of an army Lieutenant. Good grief; to be an officer in the army, you had to belong to a distinguished family or one of means or you had to be ~~born~~ the son of a military officer. On top of that a Jewish officer, the first one ever in the Greek army? Without <sup>being</sup> <sup>three</sup> ~~going~~ for ~~four~~ years in a military cadet school? This is what happened. <sup>Too many officers killed and</sup> There were not enough people around of traditional origins to fill the ranks of an increasing army in numbers, they selected some others, trained them and commissioned them. How rigid the selection was, I don't know. It was <sup>the</sup> <sup>still</sup> a great prestige socially for a man and his family to be an officer in the army.

One of his <sup>first</sup> tasks was to let make for him a proper officer uniform by a specialized military tailor. He could stay ~~in~~ the Officers club or he was entitled to decent quarters in town by the military. He could have his meals at the officers club. He opted living and eating with us in our basement. Once, a morning, the policeman saw Daniel with his <sup>brand</sup> new uniform emerging from the basement. Greatly surprised, he froze and saluted. I was fourteen and I remember, we were together and he was holding my hand, when we passed <sup>by</sup> a group of ~~were~~ ~~and~~ soldiers in their thirties and early forties, sitting in an open coffee house. As they saw Daniel, they sprung on their feet saluting. Daniel saluted and benevolently signalled them to sit. I was fascinated.

~~Several conferences were made to agree how to punish the vanquished and reward the victors, to create new nations and to dismantle the Turkish empire or the remnants of it. One of them took place in the French town of Sevres. The Greeks wanted Constantinople, the territories in the north in Thrace and most of~~

<sup>sub</sup>  
In ~~any~~ case, ~~to be a lieutenant in the army at that time~~ <sup>something</sup> it was a ~~prestigious~~ matter. It seems that the war record of Daniel was ~~also~~ <sup>constantly</sup> excellent and he had already a couple of medals for bravery. He was ~~already~~ fighting somewhere during all the past two years. The Jewish Community Council invited him and said "what a honor for all of us" ~~is~~ and asked him to accompany the rabbi to the military authorities for a couple of small favors. Daniel complied and a few problems were solved. The whole neighborhood was flying high. ~~Though very modest,~~ Our old neighbors were electrified when they saw him in his splendid uniform, with an air of maturity. Very handsome, lean, walking in a straight posture, this young man of twenty two, stopping and greeting with humility the people in our street and particularly the elderly who lived so long there. It was a real first.

The next thing Daniel took care of, was to go <sup>to</sup> the Department of Defense and request ~~to enable him to have~~ a decent apartment for his family. He explained, he could not live in such a basement and he could not stay out of it when his own family lived there. Immediately orders were given to the local Gendarmerie police and very soon we transferred to a four room apartment of a duplex, right in the <sup>vicinity of the</sup> Jewish neighborhood. We had now a kitchen and the other elementary facilities. ~~He~~ <sup>he</sup> helped eagerly anyone who had a problem with the authorities, any authorities, and it seems he could exercise some influence.

In various towns of Europe, a number of conferences took place to agree ~~on~~ <sup>about</sup> how to punish the vanquished and reward the victors, to create new nations, to dismantle other and especially the last remnants of the Turkish empire, <sup>which fought the war against the allies</sup> One of them took place in the French town of Sevres. The Greeks wanted ~~Constantinople~~ <sup>and</sup> the coastal parts of Asia Minor and especially Smyrna where Greeks lived since ancient times. Premier Venizelos, a brilliant man, received permission to simply go on his own and occupy these places.

He did just that. In a very few months in 1919, a Greek expeditionary Corps was formed and sent to occupy Smyrna and a few other towns. It did so without encountering any resistance as Turkey was in a state of dissolution. All Greeks rejoiced and saw in this the beginning of the fulfilment of an ages long dream, to dislodge the Turks from those places they <sup>had</sup> conquered four centuries earlier. Our Daniel was with that expeditionary corps. *Now a few words about myself:*

After Parnassos, I drifted around without school, ~~drifting~~ from job to job. No finite direction for the future, no planned goal, ~~no~~ guidance, living for to-day. My reading of books continued, but simply I read what fell in my hands with a wish to satisfy my curiosity and for that I came to like history. Even before finishing Parnassos, I have put into my head, I should learn French. If you knew it well, you were supposed to have some education or simply to be smart. It was the second lan-



guage ~~of the educated~~, for the people who had access to the ~~few~~ <sup>few</sup> avenues of education then existing. Knowing languages was appreciated, ~~know them well~~ <sup>as</sup> an achievement and could <sup>help</sup> provide a living. As the years passed I learned that it is a possible, a feasible ~~and~~ <sup>help</sup> practical kind of education. The ingredient was investing time, and effort in sufficient amount. It was the ~~least expensive~~ <sup>least expensive</sup> education of all <sup>in my case</sup> and you could use any time to learn ~~it~~, at midnight if you chose.

I bought a self-teaching ~~book~~ <sup>method</sup> for French and for several months I worked on it, ~~without fail~~ <sup>intensely</sup>, constantly exercising, ~~writing~~, memorizing, repeating. To learn a language well you must first understand how it works, the ~~basic~~ <sup>basic</sup> grammar rules, the sentence composition, its particular techniques. Only if you know how to read and write properly in a language, you can speak it and understand it, ~~and in it~~. The speaking is the last stage in learning a language and ~~if it becomes the first~~ <sup>without</sup> without fundamental knowledge of writing, it can never be mastered.

I devoted myself to it and at age fifteen I could read ~~rather~~ easily newspapers and ~~books~~ in French perfecting it constantly with the use of dictionaries, polishing it by reading books of literature, poetry and history. ~~Basically I tried~~ <sup>I wanted</sup> to prove something and I did because people around me took it as a major achievement. I found it ~~very~~ easy and also rewarding. Anyway, I was the only one among boys in my neighborhood doing it as I was the only one there who <sup>had</sup> brought it to the sixth grade even in a night school.

At the local ~~school~~ of the Y.M.C.A. they taught languages and I was enthusiastic about learning some. Tuition was very minimal. I <sup>tried</sup> ~~wanted~~ to take two different classes, in English and German. Soon I found out that <sup>I</sup> had to drop one and concentrate in the other. I went for German, but I could not go through for long, ~~because of the hours~~. In the meantime I had registered at the only other evening school in Athens, ~~its name was~~ <sup>the</sup> "Commercial School". It was on a superior level than Parnassos, but not quite in the High School standard. It was founded by business people <sup>and merchants</sup> and particularly in the wholesale and retail business, to train accountants and commercial employees <sup>to</sup> and fill the many vacancies.

I enrolled, though the training did not appeal to me very much. It was <sup>like</sup> better than nothing for me. I got out of the Y.M.C.A. because their hours were late afternoon and also I realized, the <sup>and further</sup> ~~best way~~ <sup>me</sup> for was through hard self-teaching.

Daniel was into those ferocious battles in Asia Minor. It was not the kind of "military walk" for the Greek corps in Asia Minor as they said it would be. The "Neo-Turks", a group of progressive Turkish officers, had dethroned the Sultan Abdul Hamit in 1909 and replaced him with an other Sultan. Then in 1919-1920, a stro

willed and very intelligent "Neo-Turk" named Kemal Pasha ~~who~~ dethroned also the last Sultan and proclaimed a revolution to save Turkey from total dissolution. He withdrew deeply in Asia Minor and <sup>made</sup> ~~proclaimed~~ Ankara, a little sleepy town, ~~as~~ the new capital of Turkey. He organized gradually a fanatical army from scratch. Kemal Pasha, whom they surnamed "Ataturk" or the father of the Turks, was very experienced and srewd. He formed a highly efficient guerrilla army on hard discipline and gradually harassed and exhausted the Greeks in that unfamiliar and unhostile territory. At the end it became a very costly disaster for Greece which was felt for decades <sup>and is still felt,</sup> Ataturk was an overall genius, the man who brought Turkey into the twentieth century through breathtaking reforms. One of them was to introduce the Latin alphabet and ~~make~~ Turkish reading and writing accessible to the masses of his people. He compelled them, in all ages, to go to school. He eliminated the head covering with the fez and liberated the women from the Harem and the covering of their face in public. He governed singlehandedly up to 1938.

Before Dannyel left Athens, he had several private discussions with our mother. It was their secrets, but we knew they talked about finances and the future. He wrote long letters ~~only~~ to our father and mother and some time to me. I answered all his letters to me and <sup>I</sup> told him about my life. Daniel was still in Athens when Pinhas was also mobilized in the Army. Pinhas was sickly, ~~but~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~was~~ the brother of an officer. Daniel succeeded to have him classified for "auxiliary" service which was for service in hospitals, military depots and the like. It kept him away from the battling front and right in Athens.

Life in the Jewish neighborhood went on and in harmony. These Sephardic families with the proud ancestry were good Jews though impoverished, ~~not only materially, but also spiritually.~~ The old generation originated from compact and conscious Jewish centers, Istanbul, Smyrna, Salonica (it was won for Greece in 1912) where religion was stronger, they still held ritual and tradition intact. Their children were not so strong<sup>ly</sup> attached any more though they felt to be good Jews. The weak <sup>link was</sup> ~~link was~~ that there was no Hebrew School in Athens and many young people were unable to merely read the prayers. In other Greek towns there was a Hebrew education, that is simply teaching an elementary Hebrew, which was something.

Families with names like Sevillea, Asseo, Toledo, Cuenca, Abouaf, Samech, Catalan and other lived very near each other, had similar histories, problems, numerous children and they felt <sup>akin to each other.</sup> ~~as one only family.~~ Especially all the mothers were good friends and helped <sup>mutually</sup> ~~each other~~ every time in sickness and in need, taking care of the children of each other. There was poverty and great dignity. Now the children by working and earning alleviated <sup>more or less</sup> the financial position of each family. ~~on a similar level to each other.~~ The affection among the women was exemplary. The ~~affection~~



<sup>had</sup> Sivillias ~~was~~ the most numerous family there. In the Jewish neighborhood <sup>however</sup> lived more Christian<sup>there</sup> than Jews in total harmony and never was <sup>any</sup> friction, religious or racial. It was to a point that each religion participated a little in the holidays of the other. In the middle of our <sup>short</sup> street was a large Church. We Jews never went in, but we were outside when they celebrated the high Christian events. In turn, they participated somewhat to our Jewish events such as Purim, or ate some Matzos ~~or~~ <sup>in</sup> ~~kept~~ <sup>father's and</sup> quiet when we fasted on Yom Kippur. Since then, I travelled much in my life. I found nowhere such a benevolent attitude among two of the main religions living so near to each other. This neighborhood was a peace island of mutual respect.

<sup>multiplied.</sup> The war in Asia Minor went on in increasing intensity and the casualties ~~were increasing too~~. Now Venizelos was out of power and in exile while the King was back and directed everything including the conflict with the Turks. Mama sold the ground plot in Peristeri and bought an old and very roomy house just two streets next to ours. I don't know to this day how she manipulated to put down ten thousand Drachmas in cash on a house priced sixteen thousand and the obligation to pay the balance within only three years. The plot in Peristeri was not that much worth. In that time it was a suburb with only sparse houses.

It was in spring of 1921. The house had a long backyard with two buildings one in the front and one in the back which meant, you could rent the one and live in the other. <sup>Four rooms were in the backyard for rent.</sup> My mother did something more. In the middle of the <sup>here</sup> yard ~~it~~ was an empty space. She called a small construction contractor-worker who built there <sup>more</sup> two small rooms and a kitchen. In a couple of months it was ready and ~~it was~~ ~~rented~~ rented.

It was an other first for the Jewish neighborhood, buying a house as big and expensive. Borrowing from a Bank to buy something like that was for people like us impossible. The Jewish neighborhood was astonished with mother and thought loudly that she was crazy to get in such an insane adventure. It was a mystery. She proved right and the house was paid out in three years. She rented, she collected, she paid the bills, she bought constantly goods for dowries, she handled finances and she made the main decisions <sup>without asking anyone of us.</sup> I don't know how she did. This woman could not write and read. She handled daily three languages fluently, Greek, Spanish and Italian. She memorized everything pertaining to family, assets and plans. Everyone trusted her including father who was glad leaving matters ~~into~~ <sup>into</sup> her hands.

A few months before, Errico was mobilized and was sent fast to the front near Smyrna. So many people were killed and wounded the war was so expanded, that constantly more and more soldiers were needed to fight. The forces of Kemal Pasha <sup>were by now</sup> ~~became~~ well organized, redoutable and powerful. Now our family had a second worry, Errico. We thought somehow of Daniel as a kind of superman and it was our consola-

tion and hope that he could protect his brother. We all were chagrined.

And there was something else. Just then the tenth child of the family was born, a girl. They named her Leah. It was the last child in our family and I believe no other woman in our neighborhood had a child in such a late age. ~~shakshak~~ ~~shakshak~~ My mother was forty one and my father fifty seven or fifty eight. And that was the tenth child. Daniel was already twenty four years of age, Pinhas twenty two and Errico <sup>e</sup>twenty. My sister Rosa who was eighteen, was <sup>always</sup> a good help for the mother.

I never remember having seen my parents relaxing and particularly my mother. My father was philosophical though my mother was always alert and on the go on something. I never remember going somewhere together, visiting or enjoying an evening in recreation. They were not even in the Synagogue because my mother never found the time to get there. I also never remember <sup>to</sup> have received ever a kiss or a hug from her. This woman since the age of seventeen always ~~she~~ had to care for two or three infants. What is more, I never saw any close communication between my parents though at least <sup>up to</sup> two to three years before the death of my father, they slept both in one and the same bed. They seemed to be two different people, the one a realist, practical, pragmatist and the other a daydreamer, indecisive, wavering. But <sup>then</sup> through the many years, they learned to live together and gain the respect of each other. And there were the ten children both loved so dearly and ~~more~~ so proud of. It was in itself already a great fulfilment

In that year 1921 which was a fateful year for the family. More than that occurred, deeply affecting our evolution and our lives. It was so:



THE FALL OF THE TWO PILLARS

In 1919 Daniel went away to the most savage of his wars. I was a very thin boy of thirteen and a half. The only toys I had in my childhood were a few marbles and the only play I had since I was born, was only with marbles. As I went on in years since I was seven or eight, time became scarcer for play. But I was satisfied with my reading.

This war was more savage than a conventional war because for the Turks it was for long a guerrilla action of hit and run in their own country and among their own population, against hated invaders. The <sup>still</sup> Greeks and the Turks were hereditary mortal enemies since the fourteenth century, before the Turks dissolved the Byzantine kingdom. It was also that the two followed a different religion very faithfully. Though there were no waves of religious persecution among the two, throughout the centuries an unforgiving hatred developed sometimes to the point of extermination. Among the Turks calling someone Yunani, <sup>u</sup> Greek or Ghiaour, infidel was a matter of personal offense. The same among the Greeks calling one "Turco" or Turk, was a serious offense. The loss of life in that war was appallingly high.

Only many years after I realized what was to be a Jewish officer in the army the first ever. I read some place that among the Europeans who volunteered to come and fight during the Greek revolution against the Turks in 1821-1829, were also a couple of Jews, but this now was the regular army of the sovereign Greece. In the long history of the Jewish dispersion, the greatest calamity was <sup>u</sup> persecution because of antisemitism. It took many faces, forms and applications of all degrees and kinds from mere ~~exclusion~~ from something to naked violence and extermination. As I mentioned before, the greatest and the harshest and the most enduring persecutions suffered by the Jews took place in Christian countries.

In the long history there was no country where Jews were <sup>not</sup> persecuted more or less, for long or short periods of time, in some cases for very long times and even permanently. But there is one only exception. Jews were never persecuted in the small Greece. Never pogroms, no antisemitic laws, no ghettos, no closed guilds, trades or professions, never forbidden to own property, no forced baptisms. A Jew was for a Greek simply a different man and he was left alone. He was considered missing the very best, Christianity, not seeing the "Truth". That was all. Except for that, a Jew was accepted in the society as a human being and no rights were denied to him.

Jews existed in ancient Greece as in every place in the Mediterranean. When Apostle Paul came to Athens to spread the new Faith, he found a <sup>the</sup> numerous Jewish Community there and he tried to convert them. He had no success. ~~people~~ could not understand how a Jew wanted to replace the Sabbath with an other day, to allow the consumption of pork flesh and ~~ppp~~ alter some of the most sacred tenets of Judaism since

over one thousand years. Jews had well organized communities throughout the Hellenistic world, in Egypt, Asia Minor, ~~Cyprus~~ and other at that time. As Greece declined into oblivion and obscurity for about fifteen centuries and the dense populations thinned out more and more, Jewish communities in those places followed the same path. Now, with the rebirth of the country, Jews reappeared in it, mainly originating from Spain, who settled as refugees in Turkish towns a few centuries before.

It is a remarkable fact that Greeks never persecuted anyone because of his different religion. The animosity against the Turks was on political and military grounds. In peace times, Christians, Jews and Turks lived peacefully in the same place and each tolerated the religion of the other. Turmoil was only in times national issues were on the surface and this was always among Turks and Greeks, never with Jews.

Daniel got involved very actively into that murderous business, volunteering to risky missions, overdoing it in skirmishes and battles, striving to prove himself in bravery, national ideals, patriotism. He received quite a number of medals and citations, among them the two highest military medals, the one pinned on his chest by the King in the course of one of his inspections. The Complex of Inferiority makes the minority to prove its worthiness to the majority and be accepted. It is the Freudian "striving for recognition", a constant endeavour of overdoing, greater personal sacrifice, unconsciously trying to "please". He was well accepted in spite of the mistrust of being "different" and had many good friends among his fellow officers.

This war was already two years old and was going worse and worse. Mustafa Kemal Pasha was a very shrewd general and he succeeded brilliantly to organize an efficient army out of his guerrilla bands. The Greeks were greatly fatigued. He lured them far deep into those inhospitable territories towards Ankara. The Greeks, terribly bloodied, had to retreat in great disarray to the coast. They never recovered from this defeat.

Errico met several times with Daniel who tried to protect him as much as he could. It was a different military unit Errico served not very far from Daniel's. He advised each time Errico how to protect himself. The fact was that Daniel himself needed advice for protection from himself. He had no older brother there with experience and authority to advise him.

Daniel had a continual correspondence with our parents and more sparsely with me. He was astonished to hear that we had a tenth child in the family in 1921, a girl, Leah. He wrote, how <sup>muck</sup> he would like to meet the infant. He wrote about all



what he liked to do when once he would come out from that inferno. He loved so much all of us and his ardent wish was to lift the family up and up. He was the hope of the future and we all believed in him.

He was now promoted to First Lieutenant. Why he was not promoted higher with such an action and devotion. I thought about it later. One of the reasons was that he was not ~~for~~ the cadet school where everyone was rigidly selected to study. But already there were in the army officers who had not passed through the cadet school and were promoted on military criteria though in a slower pace than. It may be that for Daniel, being "different" slowed the promotion pace still more.

Everyone around called him Danilo. Now he was a recognized hero, a trusted man. Later, I read all the citations they gave him, all the documents he had and I talked with several of his fellow officers in combat, befriended to him since long. No doubt, an exaggerated hero or a super hero if you prefer.

Then it happened in all its monstrosity and stupidity. The date was October 7/20. A sunny day, Daniel was free of service and ~~wanted~~ <sup>planned</sup> to go to a nearby small town to meet with Errico at noon at the old railway station. A half hour walking only. Early in the morning the information came that a small band of Turkish-Kirkassian irregulars were at the vicinity. As usual, a detail of the company, about twenty men, would go and see what was all about and try to bring a prisoner or two to get ~~some~~ <sup>more</sup> information. A routine expedition ~~from the~~ <sup>with the</sup> such skirmishes, the irregulars always fled away after causing ~~any~~ damage they could in the first half hour. The Kirkassians were very tough and experienced. The operation could not last more than a couple of hours at the most.

Daniel volunteered to head this operation. It was routine, nothing particular, not even so very dangerous. They met the irregulars at the nearby Meandros river. As they saw the Greeks, they started fleeing. Daniel wanted to have a prisoner and ordered his men to pursue the guerrillas. They did with all the necessary caution. Daniel, ~~also~~ as usual for him, was running far ahead of the soldiers some of whom repeatedly admonished ~~him~~ <sup>him</sup> to take cover. He was just to grab and capture a Kirkassian when he got a bullet and fell on the ground. May be at that moment he visualized in his mind how later the Colonel, in presence of all the regimental officers, would give him an other citation or may be a new medal and say: You, Daniel Sevillia, you are wonderful, brave, patriotic, a hero, the crown and the pride of the Greek army, we love you, you deserve a kingdom.

He was the only casualty in that operation. It finished fast. No prisoners. The bullet hit him in the middle of his head, ~~forehead~~. They stopped the pursue, ~~left the Turks get away~~ <sup>and</sup> brought Daniel to a makeshift hospital. He never

gained consciousness. He was dead at noon, just as Errico was waiting for him at that dilapidated rail station. The place where he last saw the sun shining had the name Tsivril and somewhere near there he was buried with military honors. Mourning speeches were held and his friend officers, with some of whom he fought for years together, cried and never forgot him. We never found exactly where that Tsivril place was and where his grave. Such was the enmity in the decades of the aftermath, that no Greek dared to put his foot in the hinterland of Asia Minor. Even people who were born there. Nobody was ever able to bring some flowers and say a "Kadish" prayer on the grave of our giant.

At the end of October 1921, the long and moving letter came in ~~our~~ home, in calligraphed handwriting, signed by the regiment colonel, with the sad message. In its finality it stunned everyone and a cloud of genuine mourning descended on the narrow short streets of our neighborhood, on Jews and Christians alike. It was an other kind of first. He was the first Jewish man who fell in action at least from the Jewish population of Athens. There were a number of Jewish men serving in the Army and some were from other Greek towns. Up to that time, we had not heard <sup>one</sup> was killed in that war.

After Errico waited in vain for an hour for Daniel, he decided to go to Daniel's unit to see what happened. He remained there for the funeral. It was the only consolation we had, namely that one of us was there and represented all of us. Errico returned to his unit. The commander of Daniel's regiment recommended that a long furlough and passage back to Athens be granted promptly to Errico. It was exceptional at that time when nobody was allowed to get away from the war. The only favors fighting men could have, was a short one or two day trip in a nearby town. Daniel was in Asia Minor already nearly ~~two~~ and half years without interruption. Errico after a short while appeared in Athens. In all our sorrow, we were alleviated for the first time since so long, to know that no one of our family was in the front. Pinhas, our other soldier, was serving in an Athens' military hospital.

Then more documents and consolation personal letters came from officers of Daniel's regiment. He was posthumously promoted to captain and a last medal was sent to us for him. I translate here a part of an official document:

"... His death is a national loss. The Greek Army lost its most heroic commissioned officer. The soldiers and all his fellow officers recognize his unimaginable heroic activity during the four years of his service. In the battles of Macedonia, Russia, Bessarabia and Asia Minor, in every enterprise he was involved. At that day of October 7/20 his men implored him to take cover, not to stand erect as his platoon was only a few meters distance from the enemy. He, indifferent to the enemy bullets, ran to the fleeing Turks to take living prisoners and, indeed, some of them dived into the river to save themselves from his hands ....."



How could Daniel be so heroic, so reckless against himself? Was the strong need of self-assertion above the instinct of self-preservation? Nearly all of us, in our young years and also later, were scared to a greater degree and constantly concerned about proving ourselves. I guess, I should read Sigmund Freud and the others for a plausible explanation. In any case, Daniel was certainly bigger than life. His benevolent influence lingered on us for years after his death. In the first place, from the time he was mobilized in the army, the Gas company he was employed, paid to our mother half of his last monthly salary. Then they granted her a good pension for Daniel, all the years she lived. Then we received a regular officer's pension up to the time the last of the girls was married, though it was diminished as each girl married. This lasted for over twenty years after he was killed. Pensions were not that high, but it was a very essential help.

But we lost more than that. We lost the many dreams of a better future with Daniel leading the way. This disappointment made our sorrow greater in width and length. Our parents were terribly beaten and more so our father. Our mother was always active, day and night, caring for nine children in age of six months to twenty two years old and handling all the financial details of our life, gathering dowries and preoccupied with marrying daughters. Father, on the contrary, lived in more and more inactivity, especially during the rainless many months. His body frame became leaner, he stooped forward and bent his head more, always entirely hairless, he talked less and he was more absentminded.

This man, nearing sixty, with a respiratory ailment had to cut his only remaining pleasure or pastime, smoking. I saw him often sitting in his shop, head low on something, silent, trying to hide his immense sorrow, a dignified grief. It was obvious. His "Behor" Daniel, was the knight on the white horse who would lead us to liberation. He was the image of what my father wanted to be. He had what himself lacked, guts, youth, daring, looks, a promising future before him. Aside of having lost a so beloved son, he lost with him also a dear dream to be elevated higher than ever by the success of that son. And he dreamed so many times that when his son would reach the coveted high position in life, he would certainly share it a little with him. "Gentlemen; you see this worthy man? He is a good man of much talent and intelligence. The world would be incomplete without my father". Applause. Once my father told me: Do you know what is the difference between young and old? It can be summarized in one single word. Hope. That son embodied in his eyes the hope. He was frustrated. He had lost the son and the hope. He spoke never again about Daniel up to the end of his life. He did not yearn for compassion and did not want to be consoled. For sure, the constant mourning, the sense of the irreparable loss brought him earlier to his grave. Gone was the great pride. If he would have at least the comfort of going to the grave of his son and seek solace.

The council of the Jewish community called for a special mourning at the Synagogue. In a particular session they decided to commission a very large photograph - portrait of Daniel, to be hanged in perpetuity on a council's office wall, with a bronze plaque underneath. It was hanging there for the next twenty two years permanently when the Germans took over the Synagogue. They plundered everything, thrown in the gutter scripture books, ritual objects and files. When they left, together with other things, Daniel's picture had disappeared. The remnants of the survivors were harassed by other problems. Daniel faded away from the minds. But Daniel survives in us and will be with us as long as we exist.

This chapter had a tragic human epilog. Two months after Daniel was killed father was notified that Daniel's belongings were at the nearby rail station of Rouf and he was invited to go and receive them. This day remains vividly in my memory. A sunny December day, early afternoon, father took me and Barbayanni to the Rouf Station, half an hour by foot from our neighborhood. Barbayanni, an elderly man, had two trades. He had a small wooden shoe shining trunk with a leather belt and went to the small coffee houses or sat at a street corner shining shoes. Near there, he had a handcart for all kinds of small transportations. He made a living. He liked children. When we saw him transporting a heavy load, we went behind the cart and pushed it. He used to turn to us smiling: Thank you kids, he said, but don't push so hard.

Now Barbayanni had the cart with him. He knew well Daniel and had grieved for his untimely death and now he knew where we were going and grieved some more. At the railway depot, father signed papers and was handed a somewhat large and heavy trunk painted green. A slate on it: First Lieutenant Daniel Leon Sevillea. Father, with a pathetic painful expression on his face, stood there helplessly looking at that locked trunk for a minute or two, silently crying. It was the first time I ever saw my father crying, before or after. Then he pulled himself together and with Barbayanni they loaded the trunk on the cart. As we pulled out of the station, my father murmured a couple of times looking at the trunk, "desgraciado" unfortunate. All the way back Barbayanni and my father did not utter a word. When the latter offered to pay Barbayanni when we unloaded the trunk at destination, he sternly declined. He said only to my father: Leon, this was OUR Golden boy.

Inside the green trunk everything was ordered well, personal clothing, uniforms, papers, documents, medals, personal items, souvenirs for ~~future~~<sup>intended</sup> presents, a diary, some books, some money, a few Governmental bonds and ~~some~~ other things. In later times I read repeatedly that diary of his times in Asia Minor and tried to find out what made this timid youth to become a hero and ~~and~~<sup>have</sup> his death <sup>called</sup> a "national loss". I think, I could understand. Later, as I read more and travelled and lived, I found the story of Daniel repeated and repeated.



Three years after it began, the Greek war effort in Asia Minor collapsed in total defeat. The Turkish Army was now well organized, disciplined and powerful. In August of 1922 a multitude of Greek ships loaded at the port of Smyrna, the last Greek bastion, not only the Greek military, but also hundreds of thousands of desperate Greek inhabitants in those territories since ancient times. It was a disaster of the greatest magnitude aside of the military catastrophe. In all about 1,4 million civilians uprooted and thrust into the impoverished small Greece. It took decades for the country to recover from this calamity and absorb the hapless refugees who had left behind everything they possessed.

Errico never returned to the front. Because of Daniel's death, he received consecutive extensions of furlough up to the time that there was no more war in Asia Minor. He had now his own small workshop producing leather articles which he supplied to various stores. It was not so very lucrative, but he made a living. Pinhas was out of the army and sharing the trade with my father, repairing umbrellas. My brother Moshe, by now fourteen, was apprenticing the same, leather articles. Rosa, nearing twenty, worked as a seamstress in our home, making dresses for customers on order. I worked at an Insurance Company, then a Bank, then an Import-Export office. I tried always the same, languages and reading books, without any trade or <sup>direction</sup> ~~profession~~, that is without any planned future.

Later I thought often and wondered. Why did I not find some way to study something? It was ~~was~~ what I liked. For sure, it was not at all easy or even feasible, but with more effort, it might be possible. There was only one University in Greece, the University of Athens. There was also a Polytechnical School at university level where they taught from painting to engineering. And there was a "Superior Commercial Sciences School". These were the highest learning institutions in the country. The main problem was that if I would be able to pass all the rigid entry examinations and tests, nobody was accepted as a student without a High School diploma. It was a rigid requirement without exception. <sup>beside of</sup> ~~except for~~ the 2 or 3 ~~years~~ grades of elementary education I had, all the years I studied in night schools, were on my own volition. There was no guidance ~~around~~, by the family or any educational institutions in a case like mine. Up to this day I regret my nearly total lacking of formal education. If <sup>at least</sup> ~~only~~ had <sup>some</sup> ~~any~~ guidance how and what to teach myself through reading. There must have been a way to educate myself better. I blame myself, I did not find it in time.

Life went on. The year 1923 was the first one since 1912 that the country was not involved in some conflict or war. Asia Minor was left behind. Six of the nation leaders were made the scapegoat, condemned to death and shot. The situation was chaotic, the economy in shambles, the highest rate of inflation, galloping and multiplying, ~~by the day~~. Hundreds of thousands of refugees without shelter

and food were in Athens and Piraeus while other multitudes of them were brought to live in the towns of Macedonia and some of the Ionian islands and more in Crete

Money was devalued<sup>ed</sup> every day. ~~When you went out in the morning with an amount of money, in the evening you would find that the same amount of money would not buy the same amount of goods. It had lost its value. You would have to double the amount of money to buy the same in the evening.~~ The country was now governed by a dictator, who was the man who brought Greece out of chaos with a series of hard and harsh measures some of which were extreme and exaggerated, like hanging black marketeers in public places or decreeing the length of women's skirts and putting the police to stop women in the streets and measuring<sup>off</sup> the inches under the knee. The old drachmas were exchanged for new ones and otherwise the inflation brought under control. But in economics, people learned a lesson, namely to save and to deal in gold coins and mainly in British gold sovereigns. Soon every transaction, buying property, giving a dowry to a daughter, paying to acquire a new business and after paying lawyer's or doctor's fees, was requested and agreed in gold coins. Hoarding gold coins was unproductive because the money did not yield any interest or benefit, but it was security, a guarantee against devaluation<sup>and</sup> inflation.

So everyone talked about and dealt in gold pounds and as need creates the tool, a particular<sup>ex</sup> exchange system sprung out overnite. Gold coin broker offices were promptly established, in the proximity of the official exchange building of Athens. It<sup>had</sup> lost much of its importance and transaction because of the general mistrust of paper money. In addition to the new gold coin exchange brokers, the long established exchange brokers for~~got~~ about transactions in stock and jumped into the lucrative brokerage of gold coins. As there were daily fluctuations, everyone in the country came into the game in a frenzy of gambling. Grocers, professionals, businessmen, army officers mostly retired, widows, hookers, everyone who piled up the funds to buy a few gold coins, was there. Gambling here means buying, selling for a profit and buying again. You did not need a licence to proclaim yourself a gold coin broker and open an office. Several heavy<sup>speculators</sup> ~~speculators~~ opened their own broker offices to save commissions and serve their close<sup>speculating</sup> friends. Soon Banks entered the game ~~speculating~~ and dealing openly in a currency not officially recognized by the country. While the stock exchange was subjected to rigid laws, the gold coins<sup>change</sup> were not. Fortunes were gambled<sup>away</sup> and lost daily, partly or entirely. Even Churches, bishops, orphanages and welfare institutions were involved in this game. There were tragedies, embezzlements, suicides, businesses and reputations ruined. The gold coin brokerage offices mushroomed and people paid high rentals for a little bit of space enough to put a desk and a chair with their name in the front. In a nearby makeshift kind of hangar in a house backyard, was the new gold coin exchange.



I was nearing eighteen. An acquaintance of mine in my age, was working at that Gold Coin exchange since a few weeks and asked me if I wanted too. I became the assistant or messenger of two movable brokers, meaning brokers without own office. They only worked for established broker offices and making transactions for them, on a commission basis. My two bosses were Zachariah Sciaky and Jack Strunza, very alert young people who made easy money and had fun too.

It worked like that: In exchange offices sat all kinds of gambling people representing all strata of society from the humblest to the highest. They constantly followed the fluctuations of the market and gave orders to buy or to sell. One of my bosses was continually in that long and large wooden hangar serving as exchange hall while the other was making the round of a number of brokerage offices working with their clients. I was a sort of liaison officer constantly running between the exchange and the offices, transferring information between my two bosses. I constantly brought the newest price of the Gold Sovereign towards the offices and the orders to buy or to sell to the man in the exchange. The smallest amount handled was five hundred. I run back to the other boss in the offices telling him what we <sup>sold</sup> ~~should~~ or bought and to whom, that is to which brokerage. The office for which we acted then, confirmed the transaction with the opposite office from which we bought or to which we sold. All transactions were meant on the fifteenth or the thirteenth of each month, that is if you bought, you would have gold coins delivered on the nearest of those two dates and vice versa. Of course, as the greatest majority of the transactions were on pure speculation, a buying or selling client had to cover himself before that date, that is if he bought he had to sell and vice versa. This generated a lot of commissions for all involved and at the last analysis, the brokers were the real winners.

The commotion within the exchange hall was very noisy and vivid as in all stock, commodities and other exchanges. It was stronger when fluctuations were more abrupt and quieter on other days. I earned there as much as I never before. There were about one hundred movable brokers and about fifty assistant - messengers like me. Everyone was young and in quiet days all kinds of pranks were made to each other or to passersby. We had a good time. I met among the gamblers some fine people I never hoped to approach otherwise. All were <sup>speculators</sup> ~~gamblers~~ and some of them very superstitious. One of them once, a retired former high government official, told me: If you bring me favorable prices and I catch this deal, I will order for you a fine suit and you will have good shoes too. We both won and I had the best suit and shoes in my life. Unfortunately, little after he was caught in an adverse gamble and lost more than he had won. I felt a pity for him.

*Most of the* movable brokers and those who established offices made the same mistake. While they made very good money from brokerage, started to gamble themselves. The father of one of my bosses was a heavy player in that game and had made his own office together with his son in law, a wealthy man. Abraham Sciaky, was the owner of a good centrally located textile retail store. In a year or so of activity there, these men lost a lot, closed the office and returned ~~from~~<sup>to</sup> where they came from. Strumsa, the other of my bosses, gambled too and lost heavily. Finally he returned to his family in the town of Salonica. Slowly also Zachariah Sciaky went out of the picture.

The year is now 1924. The activity in the gold coin exchange lessened in intensity and on the other hand, it became better organized in more professional hands who tented to push us, the street brokers, aside. I became now my ~~own~~ mobile broker, in every interval running to brokerage offices giving them the newest price, taking orders and going myself to sell or buy at the exchange. Whatever business I had, even sometimes little, covered me fully because I worked for myself. I will return to this era briefly a little later. Let me now say something about my father.

*but*  
Though I lived in our house, I saw my father rarely. Though I had more money than many of my friends my age, ~~in the neighborhood~~, I lived rather moderately. I did not drink and I did not frequent ~~in~~ fancy places. I deposited my surplus money in the Bank though I gave money to my mother each week. I was well dressed without particular luxury. I liked much to dance and I went at least once a week to a dance hall. I was a good billiards player. I frequented every evening a nearby coffee house as did all my friends. We met there and often went to a tavern, or to a walk to serenade or to the theater. Everyone loved theater, operas, operettes and musical comedies. I went rather late in the morning from home while my father was early away. In the evening I often came home late when all were sleeping. Sometimes, when late afternoon I was on the way to the coffee house I happened to pass by my father's shop, I would enter for a couple of minutes to tell him good evening. He was always so sad, so resigned, so reluctant to talk, that after a few minutes I left him.

It was ~~my father~~<sup>a late</sup> August afternoon when I entered his shop in a hurry, as usual. It was about six o'clock. No business, he was bent on a book reading. As he saw me, his face brightened. How are you doing, Liachico, he asked. I looked at him carefully. He had lost more weight. It was the asthma he suffered ~~late~~<sup>lately</sup> more than before. *and the saved smile.* A kind of a ghost of a man, tall and so thin, with his big blue eyes. He sat on a wooden stool. I said, you don't seem to be very busy lately, but soon the rains will come. Yes, he replied, in a month or two. Did you undertake anything this summer "Baba", dad, I asked, meaning if he did anything for profit.



No, not this ~~hish~~ summer, he replied reluctantly. And how you feel with health, I wanted to know. Not the best, he answered, but "Baruch Hashem", God be blessed, I am on my feet.

I did not know what to say and I stood there for a couple of minutes silent feeling sorry without knowing about what. I ventured, do you owe any money around? This time of the year was always the most adverse financially for him. I knew that <sup>sometimes</sup> he received money from Mother and borrowed some from others and paid back as soon as the rains arrived. I repented for my question, but it was too late. Oh, he said, it's O.K., it's alright. I insisted, to whom, how much. Oh it is only three times fifty to Youssouroum, the used clothing man. To whom else, I wanted to know. Never mind Liachico, he said. I insisted. It is one hundred to Pakeris, the elderly owner of the Barber shop next door. What more, tell me, I repeated. It is fifty to Yanni, the vegetable vendor and hundred fifty to Abraham Toledo, an elderly man who never married and made a living peddling textiles. Since many years he came nearly everyday to father's shop. But, "Baba", I asked, what don't you borrow more from Mama, you would repay her, why get indebted to so many people? Oh, I don't know, he answered, but I knew. He spent the money buying groceries or fruit for the family and gave the impression, he earned <sup>and provided</sup> ~~that money~~. Please, Liachico, don't say anything to Mama. And you, don't worry.

It was for me like a rude awakening. Are you sure that's all, I asked. Yes, he replied. Now, let's see I said. I calculated fast. It summed up to four hundred fifty drachmas. I always kept money with me. I put on the table four hundred fifty drachmas in fifties and hundreds and told ~~he~~ him. Please go and pay back all of them. He started protesting, but I cut him; don't say anything "Baba", go, I will be here waiting for you. He did so. When he came back he said, everything alright. He was smiling, a little more color on his <sup>unshaved</sup> ~~sparsely bearded~~ hollow cheeks, ~~he~~ stood there a little more erect. I put an other two hundred drachmas on the table. But it is really too much, Liachico, he protested. I don't want it, I don't need it. Please "Baba" I said, and pushed the money to him.

As I started to go, I had an idea. I said, you know Baba, I just was at Apostoli's, the taylor. I left with him some money. You go later, this evening. He will be waiting for you. Chose a nice kashmir fabric for a suit, an elegant suit, I added. I knew, the only "sunday" suit my father had was of a coarse wool-len fabric made fifteen or twenty years ago and now it was hanging on him. He stood there speechless murmuring, Liachico, Liachico. Take it easy Baba I said as I exited.

Apostoli was a good taylor on measure and tailored since many years most

in our neighborhood. Very meticulous in his work, you had to go three times for fitting trials before you received the suit. The young were his most frequent customers. For the older generation, making a new suit in every ten years was the average. Every bride groom would pass through Apostoli for his wedding suit in dark color, brown or blue, to be used as "sunday" suit for years to come.

I ran immediately to the taylor, just three blocks away. I told him my story and asked him to wait for my father coming to him this evening. He understood and promised to handle this properly. I was sorry, I had no money with me, but to morrow I would bring some. It was usual, when you ordered a suit, you gave a little money in advance, supposedly to enable the taylor to purchase the trimmings for your suit. Every established taylor in those times, used to have in his shop a number of bolts of woollen fabrics of good quality, domestic and imported from England. It was only wool. Oh, he said, it is alright. Good night, master Apostoli, I said. Make for him a nice suit.

As I went slowly to my friends in the coffee house, I felt very badly, immensely ashamed. This man loved me dearly all the time and I was a short of preferred child for him. While at times he spanked everyone in his early childhood, he never did so to me, though I had sometimes done things deserving the same spanking as my brothers received. He was always patient with me and many times I sat next to him asking a lot of questions and he always satisfied my curiosity. He liked to be with me, to chat with me and to open himself to me.

Since that end of August evening, I stopped at his shop once or twice a week for half or one hour. He was very proud about his new suit, though I suspect he was more proud about my gesture. I forced him to have a new pair of shoes. For us two, it was a kind of re-discovery of each other. When we were together, he seemed to be happy. By late October however, the rain season came and he was very busy. I could say him only hello and exchange a few words. I was making some plans for after the rain season.

Then December came. The weather was unusually mild. I again was with him once or twice weekly. It was late afternoon when I passed the Umbrella shop. I saw him through the big window bent on a book, sitting at a table, the kerosene lamp lighted above him. In the last time he had the idea of refreshing his long neglected French. I asked him once why? He replied, Socrates said that he still is taught as he gets older. I was in a <sup>great</sup> ~~haste~~ <sup>haste</sup> haste. Errico and two other friends <sup>we wanted</sup> ~~had the intention~~ to go to a very talked of movie after the famous book of Erich Maria Remarque "All Quiet in the Western Front". I thought, I will come to father to-morrow afternoon. I rushed to the coffee house. The two friends already were out to the movie house. So Errico and I went together.



With Errico, we were home after midnight and went straight to bed. I was in deep sleep when someone awakened me gently. It was Pinhas and I was puzzled seeing him fully dressed. He always went to bed at the earliest of us all. He never went out evenings, he had no friends, he even did not appear at the coffee house. His only recreation was the theater to which he went often and alone. Then I saw mother and Rosa also fully dressed. Rosa told me, father went to the rest room, fell on the floor and he feels very sick. I glanced in his little bedroom. I saw him elongated in the bed, three pillows under his head, gasping for air. Mother was bent on him with a tea cup in her left hand and a tea spoon in her <sup>right</sup> ~~left~~, trying to put in his mouth the warm yellow camille tea to sooth his throat. Very apparently he could not swallow because the yellow tea was flowing out wetting his night shirt. I heard faintly the words he repeated and repeated: "Me vo mourir, me vo mourir", I will die.

It was four thirty in the morning and a little chilly, not cold. ~~Errico~~ Moshe (he was now sixteen) and I went down the wooden steps and out to bring the doctor. On impulse, as we were in the street, I told to Moshe. It's no use. the man is dying. We will not see him again alive. Don't talk like that, Moshe replied. The doctor lived in a narrow street, in the upper floor of a narrow small very old building. We knocked very strongly at the dilapidated wooden door shaking it and its frame. A woman appeared on an upper window. We need the doctor, we shouted. He sleeps now, she answered, come in the morning. But it is a great emergency, we insisted. The doctor appeared at the window. We told him our story and soon he was down with us, fully dressed and with his medical bag in his right hand. Our house was about six blocks from there and we hasted the quiet and deserted streets. As we went up the wooden staircase, my mother embraced me. May be it was the first time she had embraced me. She was very upset and crying. I had never seen her crying. She spoke in all her three languages; "il padre e morto" and then in Spanish "~~se~~ fue, se fue", he went away and then in Greek and again in Italian "che peccato", what a pity.

The doctor confirmed what everyone already knew, namely that the man was dead. He was a man near the age of my father and ressembling him physically with the difference he was shorter. ~~He was shorter.~~ He treated him and his asthma since a couple of years. In later times, I read about asthmatic conditions. I came to the conclusion that if he would <sup>have</sup> ~~take~~ some Cortizon or a related medicine, he might have lived longer. But they had not yet discovered Cortizon.

The old men, nearly all of them his close friends since so long, came to prepare him ritually. With the Sefardic Jews, the dead has to be burried at the soonest to spare everyone sorrow and grief. He died a friday morning and the

burial took place early afternoon, before the advent of the Sabbath which starts at sunset of Friday, no burial allowed during the seventh day of the week, that is before sunset of Saturday. So there was no night vigil for the dead. The "Hevrah Kedoshah" of the Synagogue worked swiftly in the few hours between dawn and noon. We had ~~there~~ about twenty or twenty five horse drawn coaches, each accomodating four to five people. Though it was on such short notice, there were more people ~~there~~ than the coaches could accomodate. It was a ~~very~~ simple though very dignified funeral.

This was the extraordinary and very human story of life of this man. He started as the "Ninio" in an other world. Now he was departing also suddenly, a good citizen, the father of ten good children. He did not succeed as he was dreaming all his time, as many of us have not all what we wish to have. But Leon Sevellia paid his dues, all of them. Personally I can say only this. My father was a good man. In the years into the long sea of my life, I often thought upon him and reasoned and analyzed and tried to understand. I have not found him in fault in anything.

Pinhas, now twenty six, took over the small shop and the umbrella repairing. He was very different from us all. Though mentally normal, he was highly introvert, he did not mingle easily with people, he had no friends and in all his life I never heard he had a girl friend. He was very shy with women, though he drank occasionally some wine, it was only when he was offered it in our or in any other home and never in a tavern. He liked to go to the movies, of course still silent in those times. I remember how he <sup>(used to take)</sup> ~~took~~ me from the hand and <sup>62148</sup> ~~brought~~ me to a movie when I was <sup>a frail boy</sup> ~~less~~ than ten or twelve. He adored to go to the theater, light operas, musicals and everything and he knew melodies and songs fairly well. He lived very frugally, without bothering anyone. Often, in winter particularly, he went to bed soon after dark and very early in the morning he was on his feet. <sup>We were now in</sup> ~~Another year, 1925~~ <sup>nineteenth</sup> and things happened in our vibrating life. This was my ~~twentieth~~ year, that is the year of my conscription in the army. The Gold coin exchange hangar-hall was closed and the selling-buying was allowed only through licenced offices and the Banks. This meant that we, outsiders, were now outside the fence. But there developed what you could call, "black market" or street market. People in those few streets approaching mysteriously each other and offering to buy or to sell through "clandestine" or not licenced offices. Now most of the street brokers knew each other which made business more easy. But all the same business diminished greatly..

It was then that I specialized in puts and calls which is something like betting on horses. You accepted to buy or to sell a certain amount of gold coins



by the ~~mid~~<sup>middle</sup> or the end of the month. That is you predicted what will be the price of gold ~~at that~~<sup>coins</sup> time when you had to deliver or accept and pay for what you must take. Win or lose, you had to get covered with an opposite transaction up to that given date. It was pure gambling. Some made good money and some got ruined. There were more suicides and tragedies and misery.

I will take one. There was a tall man with a thick moustache about thirty five or so, very polite and generous. He was Mr. Molho from a good family in Salonica and since the beginning of that Gold coin business, he was always ~~there~~ around. I knew him well. He lost money when the Gold exchange closed and now he lost more money trying to recoup his losses which brought him to more losses. I did some business with him in puts and calls occasionally, ~~not by~~<sup>he was</sup> sending me to other offices to offer deals. He had a beautiful aristocratic looking wife and four lovable children in age from four to twelve. A perfect family.

A nice morning we learned that this mildmannered man, Mr. Molho, committed suicide. He left a letter to his wife telling her, since long he had deposited a sizable amount of money at A German Bank in Frankfurt ~~and~~ in her name and he wanted her to go to Germany to live permanently because that was the best country for her and the education of their children. She complied with it and I learned, she established residence permanently in Germany. Later I had to think about that. This was the year Hitler wrote his famous ~~book~~ book, "Mein Kampf My Struggle. When later Germany systematically persecuted and exterminated everything and everyone Jewish, I wondered what happened to the family Molho. I had no way to learn.

My earnings were going downhill though I did not go totally emptyhanded. It was evident however, there was no future for me there. I could not think of any change of activity because I was expecting up to the beginning of 1926 to be drafted into the army.

In the fall of 1925, uncle Victor died at the age of approximately fifty. He liked too much the Greek wine Retsina which did not help ~~and~~ his ulcers which developed to be bleeding. Working as a bookbinder at the same Publishing Company since thirty five years did not make him prosperous, but ~~it~~ it secured a living for him and his family. His first son, Errico, now twenty three a specialized worked in expensive jewellery. The second son, Jacob, eighteen, was also a worker in leather articles, like my brothers Moshe and Errico. Victor had also a daughter, Rosa, then fifteen years old.

Uncle Victor and my mother were very close, more close than with anyone else in life, each supporting the other, discussing and seeking mutual advice on all their affairs and problems. Rain, cold or hot, he came in our home ~~at~~ every

sunday morning around ten. If mother was in the kitchen or an other room, he would jovially shout; Lisa, where is Lisa? But she seemed always to know the moment he appeared. They never hugged or kissed. They ~~looked~~<sup>looked</sup> at each other tenderly. He would sit at a chair, mother would ~~be~~<sup>bring</sup> a tray with a Turkish coffee, a glass of water and any bakery she had baked at weekend, spinach or cheese pie, put the tray on a low wooden stool and she would sit near him for half an hour chatting. It was her happiest time of the week. We learned to leave them alone, not so easy to do in our crammed quarters. It was a ritual, sunday after sunday, up to his death.

When he died, mother was uncontrolable, may be more than when our father died last year. Especially on sundays she was beaten. No tears, She was restless, helpless, desperate. It was a staggering blow for her and she never really recovered. This man was for her the last link with the past.

Rosa was now in the marriageable age of twenty two and this was very much in the mind of mother. She was the one attached mostly to mother. Now, in our neighborhood lived one of the oldtimer families, the Habibs. Leon Habib originated from Smyrna, a tall, very thin dried up man with a moustache and a short beard both ginger red. He never learned to speak fluently Greek, he spoke mainly Spanish and wrote it in Hebrew characters. He was a little older than my father.

Leon Habib was also a peddler in fabrics. Every morning, the heavy bale on his back, he marched to far neighborhoods. He was very religious, no friends, no tavern, no coffee house, very introvert. His wife, Fanny, was the opposite. She was friend and social with everyone, including my mother and I remember, I was several times in her home. They had six children. The eldest one was born one year before our Daniel. His name was Moshe and was a copy of his father, physical ly and spiritually. May be the only difference was that he dressed a little better than his father and he did not peddle in fabrics, he peddled in other things, spices and the like. Because he ressemb<sup>e</sup>led much to our Pinhas, the two were friendly to each other, more or less so. I did not know about any other friendship those two had.

I don't know how, but the two mothers decided that Moshe Habib was a good match for our Rosa. They knew all the details, they made the arrangements for the engagement and the preparations for the wedding.

It was in the Fall of 1925. An evening about eight o'clock I was having my dinner alone home. We never were all together at the same time, except on holidays or sundays. Mother and Rosa were in the next room chatting. No door between the two rooms. As usual they ~~spoke~~<sup>chatted</sup> in low voice and I was not interested to listen anyway. I was reading something at the same time I ate. I thought, I heard them discussing about money, thousands of Drachmas, but I did not pay attention.



As I was in the street going some place, the bit of discussion between Mama and Rosa I caught just before, came to my mind. Though I had no participation in the details of the forthcoming marriage, I knew that the dowry consisted of all the linen, kitchenware, some apparel and other house furnishings as well as ten thousand Drachmas in cash. A dowry was an institution and very rare were marriages without a dowry. Affluent people contributed or left money for dowries of poor girls. Some of the rich took over all the expense of marrying of a good girl without means and even put at disposal their own houses for the reception, the banquet and all. It was a "Mitzvah," a good deed.

In the last weeks I saw more activity in our home, mother buying this or that to supplement what she had gathered for dowries into the wooden boxes perennially at two corners of the drawing room, well locked. We called them Pirate cases and they resembled such. Only mother knew what was inside. I thought, they must have financial difficulties and more with all the coming expenses of the marriage. Leon Habib was known as a stingy man and otherwise, he would not contribute anything substantial to the expenses and his son, Moshe, had certainly not amassed any fortune with his meager trade. Personally, I was not very happy with this marriage, but Mama knew what she was doing.

In the morning I had made up my mind. You would not discuss such things with mother because you never did before. You heard or you sensed. If you could do something in a situation you knew about, fine and if you could not, talking about it, was of no use. It was a little like the summer debts of my father nobody knew about. He preferred to get humiliated going around and borrowing small amounts from people who trusted him than go to someone of us, me, Errico, Mama and ask for the same. He believed, it was pride.

My business at the Gold exchange was now at <sup>as still</sup> ~~very~~ low ebb. I had <sup>then</sup> at the Bank in deposit <sup>of</sup> about 5.500.- drachmas. <sup>hard</sup> It was to tie me over when I would be in the army and I avoided to touch that money. The pay of a soldier at that time was two Drachmas a day, enough to buy <sup>hard</sup> chocolate or something like that. That saved money would come very handy.

At noon of the same day, I went to the Bank and withdrew five thousand Drachmas and re-deposited on a separate account on the name of Rosa Sevilla. I went home for lunch. ~~I received very near to doing town in the same neighborhood. I had not anything urgent to do, I took a long bathroom after lunch as they use to do in Greece during the summer and the heat.~~ I sat at the table and mother brought my food. I gave her the Bank deposit booklet. She was startled. She opened it and ~~she~~ saw the figure, ~~of five thousand.~~ She looked at me for a moment. She asked. Anything else Liachico? It was the first time she called me Liachico. No Mama, it is allright.

They were married and ~~lived~~ <sup>temporarily</sup> lived in a small apartment in the house of one of his sisters married to a ~~prosperous~~ prosperous man named Noah Youssou-roum, a very goodhearted man. Later, when the front upper apartment in our house was free, they came to live there. Rosa and Mama were again together. Moshe Habib was a different kind of man, different from us young people at the time. I will refer to him a little later. He had bought a radio, which was a luxury item at that time. It was German made by "Telefunken" and because Moshe was proud and talked much about his radio, they surnamed him "Telefunken" and it stuck.

I had no idea what kind of future I would have. I read much and now selected my books. I was fascinated with history which is very education<sup>al</sup> because it is related to so many things, economics, religion, government, political systems, war, morals, geography and some more. I perfected my French and ~~started~~ <sup>studying</sup> ~~attempts of learning~~ English and German, alone. After one year at the night Commercial School, I dropped out. I did not like mathematics though I could absorb it if I wanted. I was restless, I did not know what I wanted exactly and there was no direction, no guidance, no goal set. I ~~acquired~~ <sup>absorbed</sup> encyclopedical knowledge which I found enriching and rewarding. As I liked history, I acquired an elementary knowledge of ancient Greek and Latin, ~~both used more in those times than~~ <sup>now</sup>. I was reading biographies and the main historians. I used to go to the University library to read and for one time I concentrated in the French revolution, in French. I had always a book with me and they surnamed me the "philosopher". But I still ~~liked~~ <sup>liked</sup> to dance or to play cards and billards. I gave ~~some~~ <sup>part</sup> of my time to reading and this was the difference with all my friends. ~~The~~ <sup>gave none.</sup>

The children of our family were growing up <sup>in years.</sup> Errico had his small workshop Pinhas with the umbrellas, Moshe was a leather articles worker in his own right. The oldest girl, Victoria, was now fifteen and working in men's clothing. The youngest, Leah, was now four years old. Sara was eleven and in school. Esther was only seven. All of us lived together in the same house and it was crowded.

Mother was still indefatigable taking care of everything, collecting rents, paying the bills, cooking and feeding the family, raising the youngest among us. Her vitality was amazing after all these years of hard work, privation, and personal sacrifices, frustrations and unfulfilled dreams. You never heard ~~anything~~ <sup>a complaint</sup> from her about her health or visiting any doctor. But if you looked at her, you felt that she was not doing best in that department. Her cheeks were pale in contrast to her natural brownish tan complexion and she was now much more frail than ever before. The hardest task of all was the laundry every two weeks, taking one or two days. Now, she hired a woman to do it and she helped her. She could not manage it alone anymore.



In February 1926 I was drafted. I was twenty and two months. There were no previous medical or other examinations, tests or anything and you did not receive any notifications or other documents before. You read simply an order by the military in the daily press, people who were born during a certain part of the year twenty years before, ~~they~~ had to be at certain Barracks, on a certain day. If you were a cripple, blind, maimed, deaf or anything like that, you simply ignored ~~the notice in the newspaper~~. If you had any handicap or anything to say, something hurting or bothering you, first let yourself be recruited, take all <sup>about</sup> the equipment, wear your military garments and in a few days you will be asked about that. All twenty year olds became avid newspaper readers, searching for the recruiting notice concerning them. Sometimes a notice referred only to youths born in a certain province or area and not in an other.

My recruiting unit was the First Infantry regiment which was also the <sup>Daniel had</sup> unit <sup>served</sup> all the time. It was a huge area closed on all sides by barbed wire, with about thirty dispersed white lime spread buildings to house the twelve regimental companies, auxiliary services, depots, kitchens and the like. It stood there since several decades, just ~~15~~ fifteen minutes walk from down town Athens. Now this place is a huge green park and all around high rise buildings. Next to it is now the beautiful building of the American embassy.

An officer was sitting at a makeshift desk and assigned the recruits as he saw fit and fast. You go to the navy, you to the artillery and so on. The specialisations were very few. There was no military police, no commandos or communications or even office and kitchen personnel. If you said, you worked in a restaurant, you were assigned to the kitchen. You would learn how to cook by watching those who were cooking. If you had made high school, you were an able office worker. If you had worked in a garage, you were assigned to the machine shop. There was a corporal at an other desk and he assigned people to the particular companies. When the list of a company was filled, you were assigned to the next.

The corporal decreed that I go to the Fifth company. Each company had its own building, a few steps up from outside, a wide corridor in the middle and two long and wide halls, one left and one right, serving as dormitories. At the end of the corridor was a small office room and a closet-depot. Immediately we went to our homes to bring and let our civilian clothes. Next morning we were there. The area was a very big well kept backyard though nearly all of it not paved. The buildings were apart each other at least by one hundred feet. Before each building were some plants and flowers in neat rows. Before each company building there was a conical pile of stones about five feet high with a marble plaque in the middle front bearing names of the "Company officers heroically killed in

action". We had not yet anything to do after we were issued bed articles, a spoon, a fork, and an aluminum <sup>pot</sup> ~~vessel~~ for eating and assigned our beds. We strolled outside. Someone I knew approached me. What do you know, he exclaimed, <sup>Really,</sup> your name is on that plaque. I ~~approach~~ <sup>was taken</sup> ~~was taken~~. The fourth of the eight names on that white marble with the black letters was indeed, First Lieutenant Daniel Sevillia. I remembered, he was with the fifth company. What a coincidence to <sup>assign</sup> ~~put~~ me <sup>to</sup> ~~with~~ the fifth company. So, I met again with Daniel and I would remain with him for fifteen months. It was still his world, more than I could suspect.

The army was well organized in those times though the facilities were not even a faint shadow of what is offered to-day to a soldier. There was no sheltered place or hall for eating. Each soldier received every second day one loaf of bread weighing about two pounds, good wheat bread. You kept it in your bag hanging over your bed and at each meal you cut a piece and took it with you when you received your food. ~~Most~~ <sup>(consume it)</sup> soldiers could not ~~eat~~ <sup>or brought their home,</sup> all in two days and often they sold the loaves to civilians outside the barracks. For each meal, the trumpet would sound and each company would go to ~~the~~ particular kitchen building ~~of the company,~~ form a line outside with his utensil and bread in hand, ~~waiting~~. They brought outside ~~from the kitchen one~~ <sup>one or</sup> two or sometimes three enormous caldrons with food, whatever it was, a dried bean soup, spaghetti, potatoes and the like. Meat was two or sometimes three times a week. Often <sup>there</sup> ~~was~~ some supplement, black olives, halva, a piece of cheese and rather rarely fruit.

To eat you found a stone to sit or simply you sat on the ground <sup>under the sky</sup>. Detergent was not yet invented or not yet used. Nearby was a very long trough of tin sheet with a number of water faucets. To clean your eating vessel, fork and spoon you simply took some dirt from near your feet, you rubbed strongly all the surfaces and used a lot of water. No grease anymore and everything sparkling clean. Of course, running hot water was also not yet invented. Some other things, like washing in the morning your hands and face, bathing, the latrines and a few other accommodations were not very satisfactory. In those times it was different. In to days Greek army I hear such matters are much better taken care of and modernized.

Every day we had exercises to learn how to be soldiers and ~~even~~ it was tiring. A few weeks after I was recruited, at an afternoon, we were waiting outside our building, our eating vessel in hand, waiting for the dinner trumpet to sound to go and form the line. As we strolled aimlessly, the major of our ~~Battalion~~ <sup>Battalion</sup> passed ~~us~~ going to his office at the headquarter building. We stood at attention and saluted. He lifted his hand absentmindedly to salute and went on. Suddenly, as remembering something, he returned ~~at~~ his steps, looked at us and asked. Is anyone among you named Sevillia. I am, Sir, I said as I saluted. He watched me for a moment and said: Please come to my office within the next five



minutes. I gave my vessel spoon and fork to someone and asked <sup>him</sup> ~~me~~ to take and bring my food <sup>and put it</sup> on my bed because I may miss the kitchen.

I was puzzled to say the least. A major in those times was something more than he would be to day in the eyes of a soldier. <sup>This's queer</sup> ~~He~~ was a former high school teacher, very scholarly and distinguished, his hair partly white, about fifty years old. A few days before I was greatly impressed with him. He was inspecting our exercise with rifles as we made them after our sargent. The major remarked to us, our movements should be faster, performed at the same fraction of time as the sequence of the instructor. Any questions, he asked? A soldier observed that it was not possible to perform simultaneously with the instructor and that necessarily would lapse some time to catch and follow.

The major looked at him amused. ~~Look~~ Look, he said, the diameter of the earth or the globe is fourty million meter or fourty thousand kilometer. Now tell me, can you perceive the lightning in the middle of a storm? Yes, replied the soldier, I can. Well, the major continued, the lightning travels two and half times around the globe in one single second, one hundred thousand kilometers. Really, a normally seeing person does not need more the one sixth of a second at the most to absorb a picture and react to the movement of the instructor. Stay alert, pay attention, that's all. I was fascinated. It was <sup>like</sup> a teacher talking to a student.

As I knocked his door and entered the office saluting, he stood up, extended his hand to me and said sadly: "We" lost Danilo, oh God, what a loss. For a moment he fell silent as reminishing. Sit down, he said, we will have dinner together. His ordnance served us. A good dinner. We ate silently, without a word. I felt a little uneasy. When coffee and dessert were served, he murmured. I will never forgive myself, never.

He explained. That day, I was the captain of the company. Daniel had no business going to it. He was volunteering and volunteering for everything and I told him <sup>several times</sup> ~~once or twice~~, I am sick and tired with his volunteering every time and putting his nose where it did not belong. We knew, he was overdoing it and I tried to keep him out of it. I ~~had~~ should definitely have told him that morning to get out of here, to tell him no. He was always so lucky, but that day, it was so stupid. He paused. Do you know something, he continued? We were over four years together and he was like my own son, always curious, eager to listen, to learn, insatiable curiosity. I have a son exactly his age and like him. ~~something~~ ~~something~~. I knew everything about all of your family, his dreams, his plans, his aspirations. He loved you personally very much especially ~~more~~ because you liked to read and he wanted something better for you. Such a loss. Three and half years passed since then. What can I say?

For a while he remained silent. You know, he said, I wanted since long to be with someone of your family and talk, but somehow I did not have the courage. I am glad I talked to you. When I told him, my father died last year heartbroken, he was very sorry. Look, he said, whatever problem you may have here, don't hesitate, come to me. It is the least I can do for Danilo. I was overwhelmed. When I went back to my company, my room~~ate~~<sup>mate</sup> asked me, what took me so long with the major and he wanted to know what was all about. I did not answer. He continued. Your dinner is cold. Never mind, I said. I am not hungry.

A few days later <sup>the major</sup> of an other battallion of the same regiment came to my company and took me for a little walk outside the barracks. Then we sat at a small coffee - tavern. He told me how he was a close friend of Daniel and glad to meet his little brother. Within the next week, I met with two captains who assured me, Danilo was such a good man. I was becoming a sort of celebrity, the baby brother of a man killed in the war so long before.

But there was some more to it: Again an afternoon, <sup>after exercises</sup> strolling around and waiting for the trumpet to sound for dinner when suddenly the colonel of our regiment appeared on his horse, behind him his ordnance, a sargent, also riding a horse. They came from somewhere and were heading to the headquarters. We all froze to attention. He looked around <sup>on</sup> faces and brusquely, pointing his finger on me he said: So, you are the brother of Daniel. Yes Sir, I replied. He fixed his eyes on me for a few moments, he saluted, spurred slightly his horse and away he went, standing erect, head lifted, without any other word. Later, whenever I saw him around and in parades, he <sup>glanced</sup> ~~looked~~ at me smiling, and moved his head slightly in greeting.

I never went to anyone for favors though I felt that I was protected. They selected a number of the abler and more educated soldiers for training to be corporals. I was selected, trained two weeks and I was a corporal. A month later, they selected some of the corporals to be trained for sargent. After four weeks, I was a sargent. It was good because I received a little more pay and the most important, I had not to be a guard at the gates, especially during the night or to make service in the kitchen cleaning onions and potatoes and the like.

A little while later the captain of my company called me to tell ~~me~~ that I have been selected to train <sup>be</sup> <sup>ed</sup> in the school of the reserve officers and asked if I agree. This meant to go to the particular military school for four months, to become a lieutenant for the duration of my military service and then, in case of a mobilization because of war or anything else, I would return in the army as a lieutenant. I would also have the right to apply for permanent service in the army if I wanted to make it a career and if accepted I could stay. Now, this wa



something unexpected. The main requirement for any office in those times was what was with your formal education. Though I handled Greek in writing and speaking on <sup>handling it</sup> the level of a high school graduate, I lacked ~~of~~ any worthwhile formal schooling. Nobody even has examined me what I knew. I felt that it was pushed too far and though I was greatly flattered and I would receive a decent salary as an officer, I told the captain, I needed a few days to think it over. He was somewhat astonished because it was a coveted thing and all were accepting it on the spot.

When next day I told it to my mother, she did not seem enthusiastic with the idea. She said: You ~~can~~ do what you want. Errico, when he heard about it, told me bluntly. One in a family is enough. There are other Jewish families around. Why not let one of them have the honor? We had it already and our man is hanging on the wall ~~at~~ the Jewish Community office. Do we need anything more?

It was a melodrama like those I was seeing in the theater I frequented often. I told to the captain a couple of days later, no thank you, it is not for me, you know, family reasons. He had never met Daniel. He was amazed. A week later I happened to meet with the major who had invited me to dinner. He thought it was a wise decision. He added, get out and try something else. In the ocean of your future, you will swim and you may attain something better.

Some soldiers in my platoon were the sons of highly successful people, or a famous actor, a couple of others owning well established stores, one was the son of an admiral, several others were university students. As everyone tried to be in good terms with his sargent, I was often invited to fine houses and to parties on all kinds of celebrations and always was something. Most of the people did not know much about my level of education and I did not advertise it. My thorough knowledge of French and my encyclopedical reading helped me much. It was the first time I circulated among those families, some of them emanated since the Greek revolution of 1821. It helped me to mature a little.

The duration of my military Service was for eighteen months. They discharged us two months earlier. Evidently for economy reasons. My service to the end was smooth and uneventful. I was not the best and not the worst sargent in the history of the Greek army. I delivered what was expected of me. The invisible protection was always there. I never used it for any gain whatsoever.

As on June 10th, 1927 I passed the gate of the regiment as a civilian, on impulse I turned my head and looked around the area and the buildings where I lived for sixteen months. I murmured: Good bye Danilo, good bye.

THE END OF THE LAST PILLAR

I was on my own in confusion, indecision, lack of direction. No education and no ~~t~~training in any trade to make a living. In that I was an exception. All the young people my age I knew have made up their minds, had a stable occupation, even those who remained in the peddling business. Some already settled down and married. I wanted to work in a clerical position, an office or similar, but I was not qualified. Knowing French and having heard something about Charles Darwin, the French revolution or Dzhingish Khan or Aristotle did not qualify me in anything. My chances of marrying a wealthy heiress or winning big in the lottery or finding a large sum of money in the street were nil and I knew it in spite that I sometimes was daydreaming, ~~on that~~.

I had a respite when one of the army officers I got acquainted, arranged for a temporary position for me at the department of Defence where it happened that they had a backlog of paper work and needed outside help. But it was only temporary, for a few months. I had also two students ~~teaching~~<sup>for</sup> French in their homes twice a week, one hour each time. The earnings of both occupations were meager. My problem was postponed together with my need for action.

Then, when my work at the Department of Defence finished, I worked for a few months in a store selling shoe maker accessories. It was boring and I earned little. I thought much on emigration, but I did not know where to go as I had no relatives or even friends any place abroad. I thought much about going to the United States and I asked around about it. At that time it was very difficult to emigrate to the States. I wanted to go anywhere, to Africa or to Europe, any place and could not arrange it. Emigrating at that time was by far not as easy as it could be to day.

In the summer of 1928 I had a break. Eleftheroudakis, the biggest Greek publisher had the idea to put together the first Encyclopedia in Greek, a monumental twelve volume work. Of course, they hired the intellectual cream in the country on a permanent or part time basis while specialists, scientists and other knowledgeable people delivered articles, wrote essays and made research. Though emphasis was put on Greek history and events, this was a world encyclopedia and great reliance was put on all the main foreign encyclopedias in existence.

I was hired without questions about my formal education. They found my Greek to be passable. My French was needed and I could handle a little, in reading at least, Spanish, Italian and English. They gave me a nice desk and a good salary I had to "hunt" for illustrations and translate small articles from the big foreign encyclopedias, the French Larousse, the German Brockhaus-Mayer and other Ame-



rican, English, Italian, Spanish works. They gave me regularly a list of names or subjects. We had usually several copies of the foreign books and I would cut out the illustrations I wanted, sometimes with the articles I could not handle myself. We called it "cannibalizing". I delivered that to a team of specialists who determined the importance and the length of each subject to be published.

In certain cases I had to go to work at the University Library or the Library of the Parliament for days. Sometimes I had to research for statistics and data at the Department of Interior and other institutions. It was a very interesting occupation for me and advanced tremendously my learning I cared to know. As such a work cannot be supervised, I had also the opportunity to read a little for myself. This job was the best I ever had up to that time.

I continued to live home as all my brothers and sisters did with the exception of Rosa, but as she lived across our yard, she too was continually in our apartment and she even cooked in our kitchen and they ate with her husband at our table. I gave regularly part of my money to mother, as Errico and everyone else working did. Rosa and Moshe Habib, though married since four years, had no children. The youngest, Leah, was now a beautiful little girl of seven, the beloved of everyone. Pinhas, now thirty, was the same as before and a bachelor. Now, our brother Moshe was in the army since last year. They had assigned him from the beginning to a light artillery unit with barracks half mile away from the infantry unit I had served. There were no officers who had been friends of Daniel. In spite of that, Moshe was already a sargent.

Mother was near fifty and weaker than ever. It seemed, she had something with the kidneys and she did not want to discuss it with anyone. May be she did so with Rosa. These two were always very close. In spite of it, she was always very energetic and everything was under her silent control.

During that period something came that later influenced my life. When in the army there was <sup>a</sup> recruit from a year before, named Ajax which is the name of famous Trojan war hero. He was in that reserve officers school I had declined to be, and became a second lieutenant. We <sup>were</sup> ~~became~~ close friends. He was discharged about eight months before I was, but we saw each other and I knew all his family. His father was an old fashioned high army officer with an enormous mustache. In the Fall of 1928, a sunday afternoon, we were strolling aimlessly downtown when we saw a blond girl, wrapped in an artificial fur coat, trying to communicate with a sitting chestnut vendor at a corner. She could speak only German. Ajax tried in French and I used the little English I mastered. In vain. I tried to put down my few words

in German and the problem with the chestnut vendor was solved. We strolled together for a while trying to hold a conversation and it was fun. I understood, she originated from Berlin, Germany and that she tutored two little children of a widowed Greek Banker. Ajax wanted to meet her again. She said "um sechs", at six o'clock at the place where she boarded her bus back home. She said, her name was Frieda. Gute Nacht Fräulein.

Next Sunday Ajax told me, something came up for that afternoon and could not be with Frieda. He did not want to lose her and we did not have her address. He asked me to go to her and ask her for an appointment next Sunday, same time same place. I reluctantly accepted.

That November afternoon it was chilly, windy and started to get dark as I arrived there at six P.M. I waited <sup>for</sup> ten minutes and wanted to go when I thought that Ajax might think, I did not go at all. I waited another five minutes, I went slowly a few steps and returned and waited again. Then I saw her coming slowly. She was disappointed seeing me and not Ajax. I explained as best as I could though I was not sure she understood. I invited her to the next coffee house for a cup of tea and pastry. I tried to communicate with her, she tried to correct and teach me, it was fun and we laughed at each other. When separated, I made clear to her that she has a date with Ajax (she spelled it Ayax) next Sunday, same time and place.

To be sure, next Sunday morning I reminded Ajax about the date. By strange coincidence they had one of the rare family events that afternoon. I told him, I don't want to play the same game, but he insisted, he talked about friendship and things like that. When I met Frieda in the afternoon, she smiled~~ly~~ly. She certainly thought, it was a conspiracy between me and Ajax that I take the girl. I had not a sufficient vocabulary to explain. From now on she seemed to forget about Ajax. We had dinner and went to a movie.

I met Frieda every Sunday afternoon. It was her free day. She was not a beauty and the catch was that she was about five years older than I, but she was agreeable, very clean and honest in everything. At that time few foreign girls were around in Athens. Soon I picked up some German with her and it flattered me to be seen conversing in German. She never asked for anything I could not afford and often she brought presents to me. Ajax soon forgot about her and we remained the good friends we were before.

I was working at the Encyclopedia. I located a teacher of German, a very efficient Viennese petite woman and I took three lessons a week, one hour each, at her home. I worked in home work another five to six hours a week. Frieda helped me much in that. In six months I could write German more or less well and I spoke



it fluently as time passed. As with any other subject, the real learning of a language starts after you finish with the formal study. A teacher can familiarize you with the rules and the techniques and the real lesson begins if you go ahead learning through more use and use. It is amazing how well can you learn a language if you put the needed amount of work, without interruption and if you follow after properly. Six months is ample time for a language. I read now books in German, history, literature, poetry which helped me still more.

My relationship with Frieda was very convenient provided that I gave her an afternoon every week. It was not always sundays. Sometimes it was thursdays or on an other <sup>day</sup>. She avoided to be costly to me in any way and sometimes, when she guessed I was short of cash, she insisted paying for a meal or something similar, but she knew I did not like it. She was not jealous or at least she was not showing it. She was a good thing for me and no more than that. Basically, she was more attached to me than I was to her. It became my routine.

At the end of 1929 I was laid off my encyclopedia job which anyway, was meant to be a temporary one. I was with it for about one and a half year. Frieda was preparing to go back to Berlin though her employer <sup>proposed</sup> ~~wanted~~ to renew her contract. She wanted me to go and join her in Berlin, but the idea did not appeal to me for several reasons. She <sup>would</sup> have, at least for some time, to take care of my needs and this meant to get more attached to her. Then, though I wanted badly to emigrate some place, Berlin was not the right one with the political turmoil, the noisy ascendancy of the Nazis and the political clashes at that time. When she went in the spring of 1930, I was alleviated though I missed her. We were <sup>for</sup> over two years together.

<sup>(Knowing well)</sup>  
Now what? My only assets were French and German. Soon I had an other break. I found work with an importer and manufacturer's agent named Mr. Elias Drechsler, a man of fifty five and well educated. He knew fluently in writing and speaking quite a number of languages, among them German, French, English, Italian, Spanish, Turkish, Russian, Polish and other. He mastered also well Greek. He had before a business in Egypt, then in <sup>Istanbul</sup> ~~Istanbul~~, Turkey and he must have had affluent times before. He travelled often to Europe and his house was well furnished. There was his office though he had an other place for merchandise storage. His wife died of Tuberculosis a few years before and his daughter the same last year in the Sanatorium of Davos, Switzerland. Now, he and his thirty year son lived there and worked together. The son was also very educated and <sup>knew</sup> well a number of languages. ~~He was~~ <sup>He</sup> tall, very blond, slim, well dressed, seemed frail as if had a somehow contained disease. The father was rather short and had some respiratory <sup>ailment</sup> ~~disease~~ <sup>because</sup> he took many precautions and his voice was very hoars

Though these people were apparently in decline, they had still a going business of importing ~~and selling~~ as well as offering for direct shipment from abroad against commission. They dealt in knitting wool from Belgium, leather hides from France, galalith buttons from Germany and several other articles as chin porcellan services and the like. Soon after I was hired, they rented a house in an Athens suburb because it was better for their health condition. I had the keys of the office and the apartment. They used to come in the morning and leave in the afternoon. If they stayed home because of the weather or else, they called me in the phone and gave me instructions.

Mr. Drechsler was a good man and at the same time he taught me a trade in a certain way. He used to write by hand the correspondence and I typed it. The main languages were in French and German. He had a thorough knowledge in writing and he was well acquainted with commercial correspondence. Sometimes, when in a hurry, he told me to write myself certain letters which he after had the patience to correct or adjust and give me back for typing. It was a good <sup>thing for me</sup> ~~specialization~~ ~~and~~ in import and export you had to use those languages because nobody abroad could read Greek. In addition, he taught me how to write good commercial correspondence.

The pay was good and they trusted me. Sometimes for two or three days I did not see them and the office functioned only through me. I opened the correspondence and told them in the phone on days nobody appeared. The work was very light, I had time for myself to read and learn. I was working now to learn English which was easier for me after I mastered sufficiently German.

Matters with mother's health got worse and worse. I learned she had high uremia and her kidneys were in bad shape. It was a progressive blood deterioration. It seems, she did not seek early enough medical help though I don't know how it would prevent this condition. It was not feasible to bring her to a good hospital as we would do to-day. Most of the people when they got ill, ~~they~~ stayed and died home. The hospitals were very few and people had an aversion to them. You went to the hospital usually if you had surgery. The conditions in the City Hospital were not good and it was so crowded by people coming from far provinces and desperately ill.

Now she had to be all the time in bed. We brought several doctors. Except of prescribing various drugs, they could not do anything to cure her. ~~Nothing was~~  
~~can to day is a diseased thing.~~ One doctor told me. What do you want? This woman had ten births and five miscarriages, do you know what ordeal is that?

For several months she was in bed, body and mind wasting. She had lapses of better or worse. During that period I became closer to her, sitting at her bed,



chatting and discussing. Once she told me: Liako, you should go abroad and study something. My father had told me so a few times when he was alive. Mother said, you read so many books. In those times, ~~every good doctor, lawyer, professor, had at least his higher studies abroad.~~ You were better on anything if you went to school abroad. It was then that I discovered my mother for the first time

Often it was painful to her, but she was brave. She could not urinate and the liquids stayed in her belly and it was so swollen like in highly advanced pregnancy. Doctors ~~could~~ <sup>did</sup> not ~~do much for her~~ <sup>know what to do</sup>. The liver was affected, the heart hypertrophied and tripled in size, the respiration affected. After nearly five months in bed, when ~~an~~ an early October afternoon I came home and entered her room I saw her there, glassy eyes fixed at the ceiling, breathing heavily, an agony expression on her face. I talked to her but she did not answer. From time to time she murmured something incomprehensible. It went for hours so. I tried several times to draw her attention. Once, for a fleeting second I had the impression that her large black eyes turned to me and I fancied seeing in them immense sorrow. ~~After~~ an hour after that, as we sat in the next room, one of the women who were constantly at her bed, <sup>side</sup> came out and made a sign to Isaac Samech, a very old friend of our family. He went in, closed the door and we heard his deep voice reciting the Kadish and the Shema. She was only around fifty, all her hair still black, a simple though a giant of a woman, so harassed and such <sup>when</sup> sacrifices. She gave very much and it was a pity that she died just at the point ~~that~~ <sup>when</sup> she might receive something, a little relaxation, grandchildren a bit easier life. My mother was a worthy woman. <sup>all of herself drop after drop.</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~sp~~

The women prepared the dead in the customary manner and put her on the floor wrapped in the white linen spread, a tall candle on each side. Many people came for the night wake. Next morning the burial took place. Back home, we the ~~the~~ children sat on the floor along the wall for the "Avel", the mourning. I remember, Mr. Drechsler and his son came. I felt towards him like to a father. When I saw him, I started crying and told him: You don't know what we lost: He looked at me and said sadly: I know, I know. Then I realized that he too lost recently his wife and his only young daughter.

The mourning for my mother in the neighborhood was intense and especially among her close friends, the mothers. I remember a particular incident. There was a man named Asseo and because he dealt in antiques, they had surnamed him Antiqua. His wife was Sultana and they had seven children. They lived all the time just opposite our house. A couple of years before, after the death of their father, ~~they~~ <sup>they</sup> had bought a house in an other neighborhood. Mrs. Sultana knew that my mother was ill and she came to visit, but she did not know that she died. In the second day after the burial, as we were still sitting on the floor, Kyra (Mrs.) Sultana burst into

our apartment, hair disheveled, wearing a kitchen apron as if she suddenly left her cooking or house cleaning. She must have run all the way because she was out of breath. She looked at us on the floor, she saw Rosa doing something in the kitchen, tears running down her cheeks, she went again and again in all the rooms shouting: Where is Lisa, where is Lisa. Then silently and still crying she went down the staircase and out to the street.

I keep vividly that woman in my memory. The Sephardic Jews like very much the name of Queen in all the languages they used, Malca, Regina, Reina, Rena, Sultana, all meaning Queen. Mrs. Sultana lived for some <sup>five</sup> twenty years more. When I was near her house, I often went in to talk to her and she treated me like a son. She had also her painful share in life, sacrifices and all. She was a wonderful human being, a good mother. She lost a couple of children later in the concentration camps in Auschwitz, a son died of advanced diabetes, she lost early her husband. And I never heard her complaining.

In the spring of 1931 Frieda came back from Berlin and started working for the same employer. May be she did that after I lost interest in going myself to Berlin or may be she was tired with the tense political situation in Germany or for an other reason. We resumed our relationship which for me was a convenient routine as I was tied with her only one afternoon weekly.

Mr. Drechsler's health deteriorated greatly and his son was under constant treatment for tuberculosis which weakened him greatly. The business was down and to a near stillstand. I had to quit with great regret because I came to like the job and these people. I wanted very much to get to some other country and try my luck, but always I did not know where. Meantime I worked in an advertising company, a small ~~little~~ organisation headed by a man I knew in the army. The personnel was paid only if there was money available or paid in kind. We booked advertising business from all kinds of shops. They usually paid on Saturdays a part of what was due or nothing. Come next week, they said. In certain cases they proposed that we take payment in merchandise. When our office had not enough money for our wages, they sent us to a customer to have a pair of shoes and to an other to have a shirt or something else. We were not asked if we need it. The depression started touching Europe and business was not that good. May be, if I would try harder I could have a job with an import-export business, but I wanted to emigrate.

Since some time I did not go evenings at the neighborhood coffee house. I frequented a coffee house near Omonia square and there I had a few other friends I met regularly. One was a composer of light music and an other I knew as a fellow recruit in the army ~~who~~ was a violinist. His name was Yerassimos, a handsome man my age. We were close friends and as he was very insecure, he discussed with me all his problems.



Yerassimos was studying at the Athens Conservatory, ~~and he was a talent~~  
~~underestimator~~. His mother was widowed and worked <sup>in</sup> a big hotel as cleaning wo-  
or something like that. <sup>Some institutions</sup> ~~The conservatory~~ was offering three scholarships to pro-  
mising musicians to continue their studies in Vienna, Austria and later in Leip-  
zig, Germany. Yerassimos was on the line for one of the scholarships, but he was  
reluctant leaving his mother alone, scared with the unknown and how to learn so  
fast to handle German. I encouraged him and insisted this is a once in a life  
time opportunity. From day to day he wavered. I had the idea of going with him  
to Vienna. His scholarship provided for the rent of a furnished room. We could  
live both there. His tuition and elementary needs would be covered by the scho-  
larship. I would certainly find some work and may be study also myself some-  
thing. I would help him learning German.

We discussed the details again and again, he listening, <sup>that</sup> I planning. I  
had a little money. Frieda lent me twenty British pounds which at time was one  
hundred Dollars. She was glad, it seems, I got out of there and nearer to Ger-  
many. I started packing and told everyone, I go to Vienna. Then, one of those  
things happened.

We had already our passports and we were supposed to leave in ten days.  
An afternoon Yerassimos told me, there will be no scholarship for him this year,  
may be next year. I never found for sure what the truth was. I was dumbfounded.  
Since months I have built on this thing as a solution to something better and  
everyone knew, I go to Vienna. I tried to push him to go to Vienna anyway. He  
could always play the violin and study too. I would help him and I was sure, we  
would make it. He was despirited, he could not decide this or that. ~~I~~ under-  
stood that this man would only be a liability to me and better forget about him.

I decided to go alone to Vienna which was a highly attractive town, ~~es-~~  
~~pecially for people in the Balkan countries~~. A town of high learning. There was  
in Athens a factory making ladies' gloves of goat leather, an industry in which  
the Viennese excelled. That factory brought a couple from Vienna to teach the  
art to Greek workers. After one year they returned to Vienna and that was <sup>just</sup> a few  
months before. I was acquainted with those two people and wrote them a letter  
about my coming in Vienna. May be they would be of help ~~to~~ <sup>for</sup> me finding any work.  
Then I knew someone who had his first cousin studying in Vienna and he wrote to  
him about assisting me <sup>to</sup> rent an inexpensive room and guide me with advice. He  
gave me to bring to <sup>him</sup> ~~Vienna~~ a basket with seedless grapes.

Before I go ahead, I will put a few words about Yerassimos. It seems  
this broke his back. I met him six years later in Athens, one year before the

outbreak of world war II. Soon after that incident, he had a nervous breakdown and dropped out of the conservatory. ~~He was playing the violin for a living and~~ His mother had an accident and died, ~~he forgot about music~~. Now, he worked in the office of a shipping agency in Piraeus and played the violin "occasionally". ~~Now,~~ He repented greatly not having come with me to Vienna.

I went by ship to Venice, Italy. I arrived there <sup>a</sup>late evening on September of 1932. I met on the ship a Greek who worked on a Greek merchant marine vessel and was to board on it, ~~immediately~~ ~~which~~ ~~mean~~ next morning. The gondola deposited us before the San Marco square, the famous "piazzza". We took the "paporetto" or water tramway and went to the railway station <sup>to leave</sup> where ~~we~~ left our luggage. Then we strolled all night ~~around~~ around the San Marco streets. I was greatly impressed. Before dawn I was at the station and soon took the train for Vienna where <sup>reached it</sup> I ~~arrived~~ about nine o'clock the same evening. There was ~~waiting~~ the cousin of my friend. Papadakos was a bleached blond man my age. Greeks generally are of dark complexion. He was studying since three years mathematics of physics at the university and, of course, he was very familiar with everything, ~~about~~. We took a taxi and ~~we~~ went at his place. His landlady, a widow in her forties, very polite and agreeable, had prepared for me a bed to stay for two weeks, at no charge. It was a good start.

Next day I visited Johny and Trixie, the pair that had trained the Greeks how to make leather gloves. They had their own gloves workshop and employed a worker and a few girls who sat before sewing machines. They accepted me very well and invited me to come any time and have dinner with them. They knew a few words in Greek and always they insisted in speaking in Greek which they could not and we had to turn to German. They became my valuable friends. They owned a spacious apartment on the Mariahilferstrasse, very near to their workshop.

Before leaving Athens, I visited Mr. Drechsler in his suburb house of Athens. I was going to him once <sup>in a while</sup> ~~monthly~~ or so to sit ~~with him~~ for an hour and chat. He was always good to me. This time I told him, I want to go to Vienna and what he has to say about it. He looked at me thoughtfully. I know Vienna, he said, a very nice town with the nicest people of all of Europe, may be the world. I have no advice. What it counts, you decided to go there and you will go there. Right now it is not the best place to build a good future, but it depends from you. You will meet people, you will know some, you will make a few friends. If you persevere and if you are at the same time flexible enough, you will find your way. "qui ne mise, ne gagne jamais" he said (who does not put something down, he can never win). Go to Vienna, I wish you all the luck, and let me know as long as I live.

He was now in very bad shape and all the time bedridden, very thin, a cough



crisis in every half or one hour, terribly exhausting. If you were with him, you had to wait until the coughing stopped to talk to him. He took a lot of medicines pills, serums, powders solved into water and more. When I left him that afternoon I sensed that it was the last time I was seeing him. It was. He ~~had~~ died a few months later. He was in his ~~early~~ <sup>late</sup> fifties.

I read something about Vienna, its history and people. The Romans called it Vindobona. Once the seat of an empire, Vienna is one of the most beautiful big towns in the world with a very colorful history since the Middle ages, with a great number of spacious parks, famous palaces, wide avenues and excellence on arts and especially music. Soon I felt acclimatized and at ease there. It was not the right place and the right time for me to be there however. A lot of people were out of work and the depression was affecting seriously life. But nearly all the countries in Europe were affected by the depression.

In ten days, I rented a small room in the Wehringerstrasse. Papadakos advised me to give private lessons in Greek and French and I should help students of ancient Greek in mastering it. I knew by now enough to be able to assist them, <sup>each</sup> I advertised in the newspaper and had a few students, for two or three hours a week. It was not enough, only barely covering my needs. I had not a place to teach and I went in the houses of my students. It was time consuming.

At the Donaukanal, the branch of the Danube passing through down town, was the Schiller Kaffee in the upper floor of which frequented Greeks and other Balkan countries people playing cards or discussing politics. For me, it was a nice place to stay warm in winter afternoons and I could also earn some money. Four or five people play bridge remy which involves much figuring and calculating after every round. A plate is in the middle of the table for depositing the stake which are increasing in volume on each round. This involves writing of figures, adding, subtracting. Usually, there was a "Schreiber" or writer who took care of that. After a game finished, the winner took all what was into the plate and gave a couple of coins to the writer. I earned their my dinner and sometimes my cigarettes too. As it happens, ~~sometimes~~ <sup>often</sup> I was the main sure winner.

I had plans and dreams. I inquired about studying something. I had already befriended a number of Greek students at the University of Vienna. It proved that it was impossible for me because of the rigid regulation ~~they had~~, namely that the first and foremost requirement to register with any higher educational institution was to have a high school diploma. I approached the "Hochschule für Welthandel", the Academy for International Commerce, that is Business Administration and offered to submit to examinations and tests. They did not accept as long as I could not produce a high school diploma. I found someone there who sympathi-

zed with my case. He suggested that I ~~could~~ follow any classes I wanted as a "Zuhörer" or listener and advised me to read a number of ~~specialized~~ books at the library. He could not do anything more for me. I did just what he said, ~~and I be-~~  
~~lieved in that~~. I felt that after I did it, I could pass examinations to qualify for registration ~~as a regular student~~ *They again declined.*

I tried to do business with Greece. For an Import Office in Athens, I had several contacts and located a number of industrial products they wanted. My success was very moderate simply because it was a lousy time to do business in the midst of that terrible depression. I made a little money. In such a situation every bit helped. That winter was extraordinarily cold, as they said and it bothered me ~~with~~ running around to give lessons.

At the beginning of 1933 I had still an other occupation which added a bit to my income. I had a friend ~~there~~, a young Hungarian whom I knew in the Graben Kaffee where I went sometimes evenings when I had a little money. You could eat and dance there for a moderate expense. His name was Imre. His mother in Budapest was sending him various vegetables three evenings a week by rail. The train arrived at the "Naschmarkt" or Vegetable Market of Vienna about three o'clock in the morning, carrying all kinds of vegetables and fruit for many dealers who waited there to take over. The Naschmarkt is a long double row of wholesale wooden shops. The produce and the fruit unloaded and brought at the shops, wholesale town buyers were there, bidden and bought the lots they wanted. What remained, was bought by some wholesalers who had shops there, to be sold in retail during the day or in half-wholesale in the morning to small vendors or groceries. I helped my Hungarian friend. The whole business lasted two to three hours only.

I had a regular correspondence with Frieda who was still in Athens. I was no more very interested in her. ~~She not only was five years older than I, but~~  
There were a few differences of background I had difficulty to reconcile with. I could not simply come out and tell her I don't want to be with her anymore. She was good to me in the past. While I sometimes dated other girls, I know that she never went with anyone else, even when she was alone in Berlin and in Athens. I regretted that I had not yet the possibility to return to her the twenty British pounds I owed her. I felt guilty.

Now Hitler was the supreme boss in Germany and this estranged me more because I knew, Frieda was sympathetic to the Nazis, not much, only that I had this impression. I had the idea to return to Greece for a little while and to organize business connections and to return to Vienna where I thought, I can make a living. Now I had friends and was acquainted with life there. I liked Vienna very much as I had no place else to go. On the other hand, Imre wanted to come with me in



Greece and on the way, he invited me to stay a couple of days in Budapest. At the end of May we left Vienna. In Budapest I did not meet with Imre's mother because she <sup>was</sup> ~~was~~ ~~temporarily~~ out of town, but I met several of his other relatives and friends and I had three unforgettable days there.

I met with Frieda and she was glad to see me. I learned soon that she was often at the German Embassy and at the German Institute of Education in Athens. I learned also that the Germans residing in Greece were secretly organized and indoctrinated. Frieda did not like to talk about it. I did not show my dislike, but I thought this is the end of my relation to her. Only I want<sup>ed</sup> to proceed slowly and smoothly. The few months I remained in Athens this time, I met regularly with ~~her~~ <sup>her</sup>. I decided, after I leave I will write to her less and less and fade out. I told her only, Berlin is not a place with future because of the political instability and that I will try to go and settle some place else, may be France, ~~and she could come there if she wanted.~~

I organized a few things in Athens, but not everything I planned. The depression was at the highest level and business was very bad. I have been in Vienna for eight and a half months. Now, in September, one year after I had left for Vienna, I took the train to return via Yugoslavia. I had arranged some contacts for Imre for ~~Germanish produce in refrigerated wagons and other~~ <sup>Greek produce</sup> produce to import in Vienna. He was to discuss these negotiations with his mother. I don't know what came out of that. We were again for a couple of days in Budapest and I met with the mother of Imre, a very businesslike educated woman, a widow. She invited us to dinner at a fine restaurant. I learned there, Imre <sup>had written to</sup> ~~wrote~~ her, he was very sick for a long time in Athens and that I took care of him. She thanked me and I felt embarrassed. I understood, she sent him a sizable sum of money after he cabled her, he was so ill. But I know that he had a very good time at the sea beach with girls and in nightclubs. I did not like it. I went to Vienna and he said he will stay a while longer in Budapest. I never saw him again, ~~and I don't know what was with him.~~

When I arrived, I called in the phone Johnny and Trixie. The same day they located a nice room to rent for me near their place in the apartment of an elderly couple. I felt somehow home.

With my family in Greece I was always very close and corresponded every week with them. Aside of Rosa, all the others were living in our house. It was good that Rosa was there and took over the upbringing of our girls from twelve to twenty three. Rosa and Moshe Habib had not a successful marriage. They lived together ~~mainly~~ <sup>always</sup> because divorces in our world were a rarity. Victoria, ~~the sister~~ <sup>always</sup> ~~worked in~~, worked in a men's clothing workshop. Sarah or Rina as nicknamed, was

the only one of us who <sup>went to</sup> ~~studied~~ in high school. ~~though she did not stay up to~~  
~~graduation~~. She worked now in <sup>an</sup> ~~some~~ office.

Soon I had a few students, but this with giving private lessons could never give me enough to make a living. I did a little business, mostly locating merchandise and shipping it to Greece. The winter was cold and the depression was at its height. Young able-bodied people were singing in street corners begging for a coin, shivering and wet. My situation was even worse than last year in this town. I really did not know what to do. To return to Athens empty-handed was not something I could accept, ~~because I would return now as a failure~~. And <sup>for a second time</sup> in Athens the situation was not better than in Vienna, unless I would lean on my family. I wanted to persevere until I have a break. I knew, I will have one. In times of crisis I always had a break. I had faith in that.

I avoided now the Schillerkaffee at the Donaukanal where the Greeks were playing cards. Near my home, on the Neubaugürtel, was the Schellenberger coffee house, a little cozy place with a billiard in the midst. I went there to read my daily paper or a magazine. Soon I made a number of friends. They played also car there, ~~but it was different because the Viennese are different people~~. A number of them were jobless, some had work, a few were intellectuals and in the whole a polite, civilized bunch. I was the only foreigner and on top of that, a Greek.

Sometimes unpredictable incidents occur, one after the other, shaping our lives, influencing our future, as links of a chain. I came to Vienna because of Yerassimos and because I <sup>finally</sup> ~~dared~~ to challenge the unknown. Because of Frieda who came unexpected into my life, I learned German. Now, I knew Johny and Trixie. The chain went on with added links. The parents of Trixie lived in Neulengbach, a small place about fifty miles from Vienna. Johny and Trixie had a little daughter age six. In Neulengbach lived often the daughter with the Grandparents. ~~so~~ Johny and Trixie often went to Neulengbach on weekends. It was by railway. I was once there last year. Now, a couple of weeks <sup>after</sup> I arrived in Vienna, they were going again to Neulengbach and invited me to go along. I declined, I don't know why. So I was alone that weekend.

It was a cloudy Sunday. After lunch I went out aimlessly. I liked to stroll alone and to this day I still do. It was a little chilly that October day and the streets were so deserted. ~~The traffic is very small~~. Time passed and it was about six o'clock P.M. and was already dark. I was in the Margarethenstrasse, a main thoroughfare centrally located. I was hungry. I searched for a place to eat and had difficulty to locate one. Then I saw that sign: "Gasthaus - Tischpost". I knew. It is a restaurant with "table post", which means that on every table there was a rod with a slate naming a town, Paris, Rome,



London etc. You could write a message to any table and send it with one of the ~~girls~~ <sup>around</sup> girls who went ~~there for that~~ with the word "Tischpost" hanging from their neck. You gave her a small tip. That is, you wrote to the "girl with the red coat, Rome". She looked at you from far and she could reply to your message, if she decided to. It was much laughter and fun with nothing vulgar.

The place was full. There were singles and also pairs, some of them married couples who came for the fun of it. And there was a stage and everyone could go ~~there~~ <sup>up</sup> to sing or tell a joke. The stage was never without someone uninvited to entertain. You fraternized immediately.

I could not find a place to sit. Finally I ~~found~~ <sup>located</sup> one at a table with ~~six~~ <sup>six</sup> or eight ~~other~~ people who did not know each other before but were having a good time together. It was an empty chair, I took it. I ordered something to eat, ~~and~~ ~~for a moment~~. Then I received a card from a blond young girl sitting ~~in~~ a nearby table. I invited her to bring her chair and sit with me and ordered two beers. We had much fun. In a couple of hours, we went out together. She was a servant in a house and had a free afternoon each sunday which reminded <sup>me</sup> strongly of Fried. As it was late, I brought her to the tramway stop and had a date for next sunday. A very trivial story. Her name was Lily and as my name on my passport was Elie, in French, she told me she would as well call me Lily too.

She was in my room at one P.M. coming sunday and brought with her Vienne- nese fried outlets "Schnitzels" and the traditi onal potaeto salad. We ate together and chatted. Later we went out, ~~and~~ ended in a "Tanzabendkaffee" and had an agreeable evening. During the week she called me twice in the phone and for three consecutive sunday afternoons she came and we repeated the same. It was an enjoyable relation in my drab life.

Then an other link in the chain. It was in late November. Sunday at dusk I was with Lily strolling and chatting ~~with Lily~~. I proposed to go to a movie. She said, she had a headache. I volunteered to go to the nearby railway station to buy her an aspirin. She wanted to go to her home. I tried to dissuade her, but she insisted. I offered to accompany her to her home, she said no, she can manage. As she went in the tramway, I said, good night Lily, take it easy and call me to morrow. She replied, yes, good night. I was puzzled. Was it an other date or what? She called me next day. She was alright, she said. I asked her to come to me next sunday. She was evasive. I have never seen her again.

It was a little past six o'clock and was again hungry. In the huge rail station, the "Westbahnhof" was a large "Weinhalle" for food and wine. I went there: it was full, noisy and the air thick with smoke. At the counter, I took a "Gu-



lassuppe2 and a salad. The food was very tasty and typically Viennese. I ate there often. The problem was where to find an empty place to sit. There were long table sitting four persons on each side. Most of the customers had before them tall wine glasses and had a good time. Before buying my dinner, I located an empty space at one of the table, I put my hat on it to reserve it. When I returned with one dish on each hand, my hat was there but the sit was taken. I asked the man to put the hat on my head and went to search for another place. I finally had one at the inner side of a table, the tall window behind me. There was alright. ~~There was~~

Always, when eating alone, I have the habit of reading something. I still have it. In my pocket I had a Greek newspaper I just had received from Athens. I read as I ate. Just opposite ~~there~~<sup>now</sup>, on the ~~other~~ side of the table, two young ~~people~~<sup>men</sup> were sitting sipping their "Heuriger", the Austrian pale wine. As I was absorbed in my reading, one of them asked me if it is Russian I read. I told him no, it is Greek which resembles to the Russian alphabet. He told me, he was just reading a book about Greece. I offered them two glasses of wine. I was glad to have someone to talk. We were together chatting for over two hours. One of them, named Robert, ~~told me~~<sup>said</sup>, he was a ~~qualified~~ gardener-landscaper, but he was now unemployed. We talked about everything, ~~and at a time~~ Robert wanted to know how I am doing in Vienna, a stranger like that. Oh, I replied, I read, I try to make a living, to study something and I go sometimes to dance. He asked, do you dance well? I suppose so I said. Oh, he ~~said~~<sup>remarked</sup>, I don't dance, a strange thing to say for a Viennese, but I have a cousin who dances well. She lives in our house. I did not know what to answer and changed the subject. We went out into the thick of the night. I lived only three or four blocks from there but their place was in the Leinzerstrasse, about ~~twenty~~<sup>an hour</sup> by foot. They had no cigarettes and gave them the pack I had in the pocket. I gave them my card and said, call me some time. ~~We will be together~~. I hoped they will never call.

But the matter was not finished. It had a strange twist. The week passed and I had forgotten that incident. Monday was very cold and friends played cards at the Schellenberger up to very late and I was the "Schreiber" and made some money and had fun. A lot of snow covered the streets. Early in the morning, in deep sleep into the warm bed, I heard knocking on my door. It was the landlady: Someone on the phone, she shouted. Tell them not to call so early again. The telephone was in the entrance hall. I glanced at the wall clock. It was seven thirty. I put the coat and went to the phone. A soft feminine voice. Mr. Sevilla, I am Miss Mayer. Then silence. I said, well, I don't know who are you, please call me another time. The voice pleaded, please let me talk to you.



I wanted to hang. I was still in half slumber. What intrigued me was that I perceived an other voice there murmuring to the girl. She continued reluctantly. I am the cousin of Robert. I have your card. You know, the man you met with in the "Weinhalle" the other day. I am so sorry bothering you. I was told, later you ~~may~~<sup>be</sup> out. I was puzzled. What did she want from me? What is behind this? I asked; do you want to see me? Yes, if it is agreeable with you, she replied. Then, I said, you have my card, can you come to me next friday at six o'clock afternoon? Alright, she answered, I will be there. I did not want to meet her in a public place and I wanted a couple of days to think it over. It was also less expensive for my fragile finances. Every day I managed to be home for an hour around six P.M. if anyone wanted to reach me.

I was curious. Friday afternoon she appeared exactly on time. I am Miss Mayer, she declared hesitatingly. I encouraged her. Come in, take off your coat. Sit down. I watched her carefully, ~~as she did that~~. No striking beauty, very clean and neat, a simple light yellow cotton dress, well combed dark ~~blond~~<sup>blond</sup> hair with long braids hanging on the two sides. At first sight, she had something disarming and trustful. I had the impression, she was not a ~~real~~<sup>native</sup> Viennese girl and she must have settled in Vienna rather recently from a province. I went to the kitchen to prepare the tea while she sat near the fire place. As I served it, to break the silence, I asked, and how is Mr. Robert? She took a moment. He is alright, she said.

I passed to her some cookies. She lifted her head <sup>she said:</sup> I have to apologize bothering you so early in the day. It is because I have to go early to work. Though I live in the same apartment with Robert, I don't see him often. I get early in the morning out of bed and he sleeps up to noon and evenings, when he comes home I am asleep since long. Then I said, it seems the weather starts to get milder. Yes, she replied, I hope it will get warmer. I asked again, what kind of work you do? She said, it is a drugstore and I help a little in their home. They live behind it.

~~Again~~ For a while we sat silently there, the burning question on my lip. Finally I dared to put it in the open. Tell me, Fräulein, how did you decide to come to me, to call me? Was Robert with you when you called me? Did he push you to come here? For a moment she was ~~there~~<sup>also</sup> with a disoriented expression on her face, as someone greatly embarrassed. She blushed and I regretted the harshness of my question. She started; I was... I interrupted her. Please don't talk about yourself. Tell me about your cousin. You tell me later about yourself, if you want.

She was alleviated: This "taugenichts", good for nothing, pestered me so

long. He told me for days again and again how great you are, how educated, he insisted, I have to know you, the man who knows everything. For six months a year, he does not move a finger, going around with girls and getting drunk. He takes money from anyone who is stupid enough to give it to him, ~~from~~ his mother, from the girls, from his acquaintances from everyone who falls into his charming nets. She talked now hastingly. His mother; his mother is my aunt. My father is a railway man in Kaernten, Carinthia. I have three sister and two brothers and my mother. All live in Kaernten. Two years ago I came in Vienna to work and live a little better. I stay with my aunt and have a room for which I pay her. They are the only relatives. Robert is her only son and she is widowed.

She looked unhappy. That morning, he pushed me in the telephone booth and he reminded me every day. It was only his idea. He put me even in the tramway to come here. She stood up and took her ~~coat~~. I don't want to bother you anymore, she said. May be I will go back to my family after all, she added. May be Robert wants something from you, ~~she remarked~~. I will not play his game. She sounded bitter and desperate. I will go now. Thank you very much.

I took the coat from her hands and pushed her gently to sit again. Liebes Fräulein, I said, if we separate it has not to be like that. Please sit down and have an other cup of tea. Let me tell you also something about me. I am not that great nor that educated. I am struggling too. And briefly I told her about my present life in Vienna and that I originate from a numerous family in Greece. Soon we became friends and she relaxed. Though I was still not very convinced, I saw something genuine and decent in her. We chatted on different topics for an hour or two. As she was to go and I wanted to accompany her to the tramway, I opened my cupboard to take a handkerchief. She saw my dirty laundry thrown there in disarray. As at the Cleaner's the cost of laundry was by weight and there was a minimum, I always gathered as much as possible and brought all together to save something. She was appalled and asked me if I allow her to take it and wash and iron it herself. I reluctantly accepted. Later I was not so sure that I did the right thing. Her name was Martha Maria. They call me Mitzi she said. It was all I knew of her. Mayer is a very common name in Vienna. *And I did not have her aunt's family name.*

Our next date was <sup>coming</sup> ~~next~~ thursday afternoon. I was curious if she will come. When I arrived a little before six o'clock, she was already there and the room looked much cleaner. She had brought saussages, cheese and Viennese "Semel", buns. I felt some warmth in my lonely life. It was as if we knew each other since long. When I put her again on the tramway that evening, I went whistling home and did not feel the cold. I thought, I am a fortunate man after all.



A TOUCH OF DESTINY

It was an uneasy political time for this beautiful town of Vienna with the many beautiful parks, the wide boulevards and thoroughfares, the famous music, the opera house, the many theaters and the gothic churches. Though the empire was dissolved and the population of Austria had shrunk from fifty six million to only eight, this town retained its imperial atmosphere, the last emperor Franz Joseph was still in the mind of everyone and the now impoverished nobility was still there. Vienna was always the cosmopolitan town of achievement and culture for the peoples of the old empire, the Yugoslavs, the Czechoslovaks, the Hungarians, the Polish and all the others. Two million people, among them two hundred thousand Jews and several other numerous minorities, existing in harmony together.

~~From Vienna~~ A very cold winter and an unprecedented recession with a lot of unemployment, bankruptcies, misery. What was now, the first time in the history of this town, was the increasing political violence as the German Nazis started to gain influence on the disenchanted people and organize them against their own Government. The Nazis promised much and distributed money around. The tortured masses had nothing to lose, or they thought so.

I felt, I had to go <sup>out of Vienna</sup> ~~some place else~~. Only I did not know where. ~~There~~ I had no ~~other~~ alternative from waiting for the next break. I was often at Johny's and sometimes I stayed there for lunch or dinner and often I needed that. I avoided burdening them much with my problems. I met regularly with Mitzi and we mutually avoided telling much about our problems. I knew that she had lost her job and that she was not very happy living at her aunt's. As soon as she could land an other ~~good~~ job, she wanted to rent a room somewhere. Sometimes I was so short of funds that I could not pay for a dinner and we would go only for a cup of coffee. A few times she forced me to go to a Weinhalle or small restaurant and she paid, which grieved me and I felt guilty. But we stayed in good terms. I had a few lessons, I made some "writing" for the card players in the coffee house and had from time to time a minimal profit from business with Greece. It was so bad that, certain evenings, as soon as I earned from "writing" enough to buy myself a "Gulashsuppe", I rushed to the railway station restaurant.

At the end of <sup>March</sup> ~~February~~ of 1934, for the first time I was unable to pay my modest rent and I felt ashamed. This old couple had a small pension and supplemented by subletting their only spare room to me. They felt that my finances were not rosy, but all the same. It was now the fifth of April. I told the lady, I cannot pay and I will be moving out. She said, she will wait a little longer. I answered, I don't see how I will be able to pay and better, I am moving out.

It was a saturday. I filled in a haste my two luggage and at noon I brought them at Johny's workshop. He was surprised seeing me. As he had some business with two people, I told him I will come later, I ~~could~~<sup>and</sup> slip<sup>ed</sup> out promptly. I went straight to the Schellenberger Kaffee. What bothered me was that in the afternoon I was to meet with Mitzi at three P.M. before the building I ~~had~~<sup>lived in</sup> ~~was~~. For not bothering the elderly couple, often we met before my building. I was upset and decided not to go and meet Mitzi. Anyway, I had no money and did not want to put her again to pay for me. I knew, she was jobless now and money was very scarce for her.

~~Myself~~, Mitzi would soon come there looking for me. So I went to another nearby coffee house where a few acquaintances of mine were sitting. I passed the time reading magazines and watching people playing cards. It was a kind of family coffee house where idle housewives and elderly people went to have a cup of coffee, socialize and play cards and the most important save in heating expense in their homes. They sat for many hours ~~and~~ chatting and playing cards. Late evening I returned to Schellenberger and Ferdinand, the waiter, told me that Mitzi was several times there looking for me and that she left a phone number I should call her. I said, alright and did not call. I did some writing. I earned enough for a hot soup and a few cigarettes.

Though beginning of April, it was a cold night. The coffee house closed at midnight. I did not tell anyone, I had no place anymore to sleep and went slowly to down town, stopping before show windows of the well lighted big department stores in the Mariahilferstrasse. I ~~thought~~<sup>and Raetznerstrasse I wanted</sup> to sit in one of the coffee houses which ~~stayed~~<sup>were</sup> open all night, but I decided against it because the little money I had in my pocket would be very much needed to buy a coffee and a roll in the morning. I had some credit at Schellenberger's with Ferdinand, but they opened at nine o'clock A.M. So I went and came back through the Mariahilferstrasse and went again and came back again. I wanted to sit on bench in the Opernring, near the Opera house, but it was too cold. So I strolled, I entered coffee houses and in a few minutes got out without taking anything, just to warm myself. As the daylight with the pale sun appeared, I tried to wash my face with water from a faucet in the park. It was frozen and I had difficulty to make it run. I felt better. I decided to wait up to nine o'clock and save my money for cigarettes. I asked Ferdinand for two eggs, coffee and rolls. He told me, your girl~~friend~~ friend will be here before eleven o'clock. I said, O.K., I don't know, I have to go somewhere now, and I went. The last person I wanted to see now was Mitzi.

Now it was a little warmer. I ~~strolled~~<sup>walked</sup> and sat in a park. Then I went to the other coffee house. On the way I thought, I had some money coming from Greece for a little merchandise I had sent last month. If it comes soon, I could stay in



a small hotel by the week and we would see. I need time to pull <sup>myself</sup> out of this. Always something came to pull me out from a crisis. People were friendly to me in this coffee house, I guess because I was a foreigner and they considered me to be educated, ~~because I knew a couple of other languages~~. In the two coffee houses, when someone tried to solve the crossword in the paper and missed a word in history, geography, Greece or similar, I was asked and often I had the right word.

Now someone offered me a cup of coffee. At a table the players asked me to do some "writing" for them. I earned a meal, ~~in the "Schellenberger"~~. Late evening I went to Schellenberger where an angry Ferdinand told me I have to do something with the girl coming and going and calling in the phone. He said, I will not put myself anymore with this. Call her and tell her you are not more alive, ~~for her~~.

But There was something more. Among the people in Schellenberger, I acquired a very close friend named Hans Oboril. A couple of years <sup>younger</sup> than I, he was the head waiter in a fashionable typical Viennese restaurant just opposite to one of the main theaters. He had no parents, only a twin brother who also was a waiter in a big down town restaurant. He was an avid book reader and very alert. He worked always up to late into the night, six days a week. He came at Schellenberger's for an hour or two around noon or early afternoon. He was very interested in history and we were often discussing on this subject. Now, he heard about me from Ferdinand and guessed that something wrong was with me and wanted to see me. Up to then I did not tell anyone, I had left my room.

It was again midnight and I dreaded <sup>to have</sup> ~~again~~ <sup>once more</sup> to stroll all night to down town and back again and again. As the coffee house closed and I went out with the last two customers I knew, I said goodnight and headed to down town. The one of them named Peter shouted at me; where are you going? He approached me. I told him I have no more a place of my own. Peter was jobless since several months and in a worse financial position than ever. He lived in a rented very small room with a narrow bed, but at the corridor <sup>he said</sup> outside it there was a discarded old sofa and I could as well pass the night there, <sup>he said</sup> but I had to get up at dawn before his landlady sees me. He had not paid ~~for~~ the rent since two months and he did not want to upset her. It was a miserable place. I was cold and he took down the heavy dusty curtain from the large window. It was a good place to sleep and I felt warm and comfortable. After all happiness is adjusting, it is a state of mind.

At dawn I was out so that "die Alte", the old woman would not see me. Later Ferdinand gave me a good breakfast and a sermon. Why a man like me had to drift and to hide like that, he wanted to know? Alright Ferdi, I say, you are right. Don't worry. Tell Hans, I will be here early afternoon or may be I go to his room in the Apollogasse to see him. Take it easy and thanks. That ~~monday~~ <sup>morning</sup> morning I had to give

a lesson to a postgraduate theology student. He wanted to translate certain biblical excerpts from Greek. He knew it perhaps better gramatically than I did, but I could grasp easier expressions and meanings. Modern Greek ~~is the same~~ <sup>as</sup> is the same language with the ancient, only more simplified in grammar and composition with a number of new words and a somewhat different application of a number of ancient words while a great many of ancient words and expressions are used intact in modern Greek. I came to understand ancient Greek more through teaching than by previous studies. As I was paid for each lesson on the spot, I had here four shillings, a good lunch.

At noon I went to my friend Hans Oberil at the Apollogasse. He had a nice <sup>of</sup> long room in which there were two beds along the one wall. He knew only that I left my room and I did not tell him anything else. He said, I can come and sleep in the other bed because his room mate, a teacher, had returned to his family in Salzburg. I did not want to burden him and said, we will see. He ~~wanted~~ <sup>tried</sup> to give me some money. I did not want to take it and after a squabble I accepted ten Schilling. He added, he told Ferdinand to let me have anything in the coffee house and he would <sup>for</sup> pay it. But the last place I wanted to be now was at Ferdinand's Kaffee.

<sup>again</sup> I passed for a moment to see Ferdinand. He was nervous because Mitzi <sup>had</sup> called him twice in the phone and just a little before she was there. I went and had a good lunch at the railway station and then I went to the other coffee house to read and watch the bridge rummy players, as usual. What I wanted now was to go to Johny's to see if there was any mail for me because I had told my landlady to deliver my mail to him as it was in the same block. But how to face Johny and Trixie?

At five P.M. who appeared there of all people? It was Mitzi. Someone <sup>who</sup> must have seen me, told Ferdinand and he told Mitzi. She sat silently at my <sup>table</sup> ~~place~~ as I was reading. She said, come, we go some place else to talk, I want to talk <sup>to</sup> with you. As we went in the street, she started crying. Do you know that Johny and Trixie are looking everywhere for you and they <sup>are going</sup> ~~want~~ to mobilize the police to find you? There are a couple of letters for you. Look Mitzi, I replied, why don't you go home and we will talk it over another time? Don't worry about me. I am a grown up boy. I could not stand it having her crying in the street. She exploded; you must come with me to Johny right now. What do you mean leaving there your luggage and disappearing like that?? And if you intend to pass your nights in the streets, I will see that from now on you have company, my company, up to the time both of us drop dead from exposure and starvation. This will solve everything.

As we entered the ~~leaves~~ workshop, Johny and Trixie were furious. I felt so embarrassed with all the turmoil I caused. Mitzi felt how painful it was for me and did not let them utter a word. She said, it's alright, everything alright, he will tell us another time. Everyone calmed down.



It was time to close the workshop. Trixi said, this evening we have company home. You stay here. Wait a minute with Mitzi, and they went. I did not understand. This was a workshop full of sewing machines, a very long wide table for stretching and cut the smooth goat hides and a lot of other materials around. Soon came Ludmilla, the worker-servant of my friends. She came from Slovenia to learn the trade and she lived with Johnny and Trixie also as a house maid. Trixie originated from Slovenia. She brought blankets and spreads and a pillow and the long table became a bed. Half an hour later she returned with a good dinner for us and she reminded me, don't forget to lock the door. Soon after that Mitzi went.

It was ~~ag~~ quite an adventure. I was supposed to wake up early enough for the workers coming in the morning, but I did not. When I waked up it was bright day, the girls were around my makeshift bed giggling and kidding. I felt weak and had fever. Since that great illness with typhus in my childhood, I was never ill. Mitzi was there already and she felt that something wrong was with me. Trixie too. I wanted to get out. In one of the letters was some money. I minimized it, but not the others. They put me in bed in the apartment. Now, for three or four days, Mitzi was there from early morning ~~to~~ late evening.

They put me under wraps and as soon as I felt better, I went to the Schellenberger Kaffee and I met Hans Oboril. By ~~knew~~<sup>now</sup> he knew the whole story. The same evening I transferred my luggage and myself in Hans room. His landlady, Mrs. Lautsch in her sixties, was a wonderful woman. I felt again secure and soon recovered. Mitzi had now a part time work and was every day with me. I don't know what I would do without her at that time.

I wanted to get out of Vienna and I thought about taking Mitzi with me or going somewhere and let her come after there. Now, most of my friends and acquaintances were Nazi sympathizers and some of them already active. Two of ~~my friends~~<sup>these</sup>, the brothers Hofbauer, suddenly had money and were recruiting others. Hans was scornful with such people. ~~But later he ended also to be a fanatical Nazi. I wanted to get out of Europe and~~ made the round of South American and African consulates. Especially I thought about South Africa. I could not find my way. ~~When the long expected break came. Aside of Greece, I had no one anywhere in the world to rely upon.~~

From time to time I visited a small factory specializing in the production of woven labels for sewing them inside all kinds of garments with the name of the manufacturer. My connection in Greece would send me the name, size and kind of the label as well as the quantity desired and I would see that it was delivered to me and I sent it to Athens. It was not a big business and I did not earn much because at that time not too many tailors or shirt makers used such labels.

The owner, an affable man in his late forties, Mr. Steiner, was friendly to me. Once he took me to his factory about thirty or forty miles from Vienna. A small <sup>workshop</sup> ~~factory~~ full of special looms and a dozen workers. In Vienna he had relatively spacious offices with five girls and one man. His company was known well. He had only two salesmen abroad and a few local agents. Business was good.

He proposed to me to work for him as a travelling salesman. My knowledge of French was handy and at that time I could handle Italian and English in addition to German and Greek. Sixty French francs a day (something like ten dollars), all my local travelling expenses and a commission percentage progressively increasing. My problem was Mitzi, but I could not miss this break. I felt very badly leaving her. I discussed it with her. She was very brave. We would wait. I would work for one year and may be in the meantime bring her <sup>to</sup> some place like Paris or Brussels. ~~on after the year, when~~ I would save some money, we would settle together, ~~some~~ ~~day~~. She could easily find work with children, like Frieda did. My correspondence with Frieda <sup>had</sup> faded out and so was with our relation. I promised to Mitzi to return to Vienna to see her by first opportunity.

In addition to my passport they issued for me an ~~additional~~ <sup>feigned</sup> international commercial ~~passport~~ of a travelling salesman, in three languages. They gave me some money and I boarded the train for Strassbourg, France. In an hotel I met with a Mr. Bernard Herrmann, an elderly salesman of the Company, a very religious Jew residing in Frankfurt, Germany. I was to travel with him for one month to learn the trade, but this man did not know one word in French. We had to travel nearly every day to an other town to visit taylorers and garment manufacturers. This man was fast constantly praying. Early friday afternoon we had to immobilize ourselves not even reading mail up to saturday night. He ate only kosher food and as we had not a kosher restaurant in every small town we went, he ate mostly dairy, vegetables and food. On saturdays, <sup>neutrel</sup> ~~when~~ we located a kosher restaurant, <sup>every</sup> ~~he~~ did not ~~keep~~ any money in his pocket. Either they had to extend him credit, or I had to have some money with me, which made me the Sabbath goy, the gentile who kindles the fire in Jewish homes. He was a fatherly type, but it was not easy to work with him.

It was funny. I had three albums with "etiquettes tissées" or woven labels of all kinds glued in. As Mr. Herrmann did not speak French, mostly I went to customers while he waited outside. We visited any town which happened to be near the one we were. In every railway directory you could find in any hotel, there was a detailed regional map with information about population, distances, industry and commerce. It was just what we needed. After nearly four weeks, Mr. Herrmann headed north and I was alone. He said, he would reach Frankfurt and quit this business.



It was in Besançon I started to be on my own. The company did not put any travelling schedule upon me. I could go anywhere I wanted provided that I sent orders. Every week day evening I had to send to Vienna a report of activity with any orders signed by the customers I might have booked, I named the places I was and gave them the town I anticipated to be next week for their correspondence to me. My address was at the local post office, "Poste Restante". In all the post offices there was a counter to distribute correspondence to travelling people or without permanent address. Every fifteen days I received my half monthly check for the sixty francs a day plus my travelling expenses as per my list I submitted once monthly. Railway was not expensive, especially more because I travelled always small distances. The checks were sent to me by a Bank in Strassbourg, France.

It was the good life. I stayed always in hotels reserved for salesmen with the particular green plaque outside. They were small though very comfortable. ~~hotels~~ Each of them had a good restaurant in which a couple of separate long tables were marked for salesmen only. The rooms and the food were lower priced for salesmen.

I sent money to Frieda to repay my debt to her and I sent some money to my sister Rosa for family expenses. I corresponded frequently with Mitzi in Vienna. I had from her short letters without answers to a number of subjects I wrote her about. It was already six weeks I had left Vienna when I received a pathetic letter from her. Please come soon back ~~to~~ Vienna. I miss you. I was at a loss to understand how she could ask that when she knew I was under one year contract, and that in Vienna I had no chance at this time to earn a living. I sent her a card, <sup>thru</sup> it is not possible to think about it now and please tell me what is the matter.

One week later came the big letter. Something which never crossed my mind. She was pregnant. I never expected that. I was upset. Right now, after all those bad times, I looked to the future with confidence. ~~It was a big surprise.~~ She wrote me, if I cannot come she will somehow manage and I have not to worry. She hopes that we will meet again some time. She did not live anymore with her aunt. She gave me the address of a Mrs. Bauer, presumably her friend or she lived in her home. It was not clear to me.

I took time and wrote to Mitzi a long letter. I explained that it was the worse time now to have a baby. I knew of an obstetrician from Salonica, Greece who had his practice in Vienna. I had met a few times with him before. I wrote Mitzi to go to him immediately and without any delay and also that I am contacting the doctor in this matter. Of course, I would pay him for the abortion. I calculated, the pregnancy was less than two months. Then I received a couple of letters from her, but no mention about the abortion. I thought, she was ashamed writing about it. I also had no news from the doctor. I supposed, <sup>payment</sup> she left ~~it~~ up to my coming to Vienna as I had written to him. I wrote to him again. No reply.

I was travelling continually. I tried to be in a bigger town during the weekend. I reached Lyon and slowly I made it to Paris. It was a dream since long to visit it and I was greatly impressed. I had the address of a good friend of my brother Errico, a Jewish man from Patras who lived in Athens. He was a dentist now in Paris. I stayed a few days with him. Then I headed to the channel, then back to Paris and again after a few days I started visiting north because I wanted to go <sup>the</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>and work</sup> Belgium. I received letters from Mitzi though not so often. We never said anything about the abortion. It was certain, the matter was settled and I was glad for it. ~~any~~ Once I wrote to her so.

In November there was something we disagreed with the company and I thought to stop for ~~for~~ two or three months travelling in the heart of the winter. Since the first of May I left Vienna, I did not cease travelling, sometimes twice in one day and it was tiring. I had a good <sup>Greek</sup> friend <sup>in</sup> ~~from~~ Vienna. He originated from Macedonia, Greece and was a cigarette worker. He was now working in Hamburg, Germany. ~~I had a correspondence with him.~~ He wrote <sup>me</sup>, he had a good job and I could go and stay in his room. At the <sup>middle</sup> ~~beginning~~ of November, after I was on the road for <sup>nearly</sup> ~~seven~~ <sup>six</sup> months, I decided to go to Hamburg. I was curious to see what was in Germany and I never intended to stay permanently there.

Hitler was already chancellor and the supreme boss. Everywhere fiery slogans hanging between the houses on wide textile bands, flags with the Swastika, parades, martial songs, loudspeakers, S.A. men everywhere in the street, the Hitler paramilitary organization, people greeting each other by lifting their right hand and shouting Heil Hitler, every place the slogan "Deutschland Erwache", Germany awake! A pandemonium of politics, terror, intimidation. Germany was in flames.

I was well accepted by Yanni, my Greek friend and his girl friend. He lived in a nice building downtown. I had some money and I had a good life relaxing. I was often in "Tanzabendkaffees" where many S.A. young men frequented among them ~~many~~ girls of the same organization. I was lucky that in my passport no religion was mentioned as it was with the German passports. When they heard I was a Greek, <sup>for a while</sup> ~~instantaneously~~ became ~~friends~~. The Greeks were for them coming straight from the ancient arian antiquity. I teased them by telling that if they spoke about civilisation, we the Greeks had a great one when all of Europe, including Germany lived behind the dark ages. They liked that and were enthusiastic and admired me. Once one of them asked me as to whether there are any Jews in <sup>Greece</sup> ~~Germany~~. I replied, I never saw one and asked if there are any in Germany. They found it funny and laughed for long.

I wondered where Frieda might be now. May be she returned already to Berlin. It was over one year I left Athens. But I was not interested to go and search for her. It was very bad I lost track of Mitzi. I wrote her from Brussels that I intend



*though I gave my new address*  
to go to Hamburg for a while ~~and~~ <sup>again</sup> I had no reply. I wrote again to her at the address of Mrs. Bauer and had no response. I did not know to whom to apply to ~~find~~ <sup>locate</sup> her, ~~address~~. She was not the kind of person to out the correspondence like that. Did she return to her family in Kaernten? I thought, in spring I will have to go to Vienna, but first I had to settle a couple of matters.

I had a good time in Hamburg. In the first place I could, as a foreigner, buy "Register Marks" at half the rate. They were "war reparations marks" bought abroad and spent in Germany. It was a kind of an automatic fifty percent discount on all money spent in Germany by a foreigner. Then Yanni had a number of friends and among them Greek students. Before Christmas I went to Holland, in Groningen, Amsterdam, Rotterdam and other places. I returned to Hamburg. Then by end of January I was again in Brussels where I had already some friends among the Greeks residing there.

I established contact with the company in Vienna and started again working normally. Belgium is a very small country in territory. I established a home in Brussels and always returned after making my trips which lasted a couple of days at the most or even I could be back in the evening. If you ride the railway to any direction for a couple of hours, you reach the border of an other country. At that time Brussels was flooded with foreigners from many countries, most of them from Germany fleeing the Nazis or afraid with the future in Germany. The Belgians were very nervous and refused the permit to work to nearly everyone entering the country. In spite of my international ~~passport~~ <sup>passport</sup>, I had ~~no work permit~~ <sup>no work permit</sup>. They gave me ~~no~~ <sup>no</sup> extensions of fifteen days, ~~one~~ <sup>one</sup> after the other, without any certitude that the next one will be granted. In France it was also not an easy time, but you received there extensions of ~~three~~ <sup>three</sup> months.

Anyway, by mid April I made up my mind to go to Vienna. My one year contract with the company would soon expire. I went to Frankfurt and Munich, Germany, then Salzburg, Austria and on ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> second of May I reached Vienna, exactly one year and one day after I left. Now the year was 1935.

Hans Oboril had written to me, he expected me to stay in his room where anyway the one bed stood empty. We were very glad to see each other. I went to Johnny and Trixie and we were also happy to see each other. I had sent them a lot of cards this past year from the many ~~times~~ <sup>places</sup> I was. Everyone envied me and in the Schellenberger Kaffee I became a celebrity.

I wondered as to whether Mitzi is in Vienna and I wanted to see her. I wrote a postcard to her at Mrs. Bauer address. I thought to allow a few days for a reply and then to go myself to inquire at both addresses known to me, her aunt's and of Mrs. Bauer. She must be somewhere and if she returned to her family, I would try to

locate the address. I was sure, if she is in Vienna and she knows I am here, she will certainly appear.

I was nearly a week in Vienna that wednesday and I thought, if up to morrow I don't hear anything from Mitzi, I will go to her aunt's to see what I can learn. Since I met Mitzi ~~some time before~~, I saw Robert only once and I avoided it. I found it would be better not to have anything to do with him.

Next morning early, before eight o'clock, a hand shook me and I awakened. It was Hans, fully dressed, because that morning he had something to do at the city hall. He told me that someone was there to see me. He opened the door going out and the next second Mitzi was next to my bed. She bent and kissed me silently.

I sat on the bed and watched her. I was perplexed. What was with you, I asked, why did you not write to me all these months, why did it take you so much time to come to ~~find~~ <sup>after a word,</sup> me? Were you out of town? She did not ~~say anything~~, head slightly bent as she sat on the chair next to the bed. For sure, I thought, something has changed with her. She was different and I could not define precisely in what. She was wearing a "dirndl" a kind of cotton blue-pink checkered dress, her skin was whiter or less tanned than last year, her eyes appeared bigger than before, her face more mature though always young. Her dark blond hair was as always carefully combed with the braids hanging on both sides. I asked again jokingly. You are a big girl now Mitzi. How is life? She did not answer and I became impatient. I put my hand on her shoulder, shook her. I continued, "was fehlt Dir" Mitzi, what is wrong with you, "was ist denn los", what happened, is anything with health? She murmured; I was ill, very ill.

She did not want to say anymore and as I pressed harder, she started crying. she stood up and wanted to go. I held her back, I tried to understand, to guess. Is anything with her family, an accident? some disaster or calamity. Had she an incurable ailment or something?

Then the sky ~~fell~~ <sup>fell</sup> on my head. "Ich habe ein Kind", I have a child, she whispered. I was electrified, stunned, speechless. Wait a minute, I said while I jumped out of bed, dressed myself in a hurry, washed my face. We get out of here. As we reached the street, I turned to her. Is it a girl, I asked? No, it's a boy, she replied. It's a boy, it's a boy.

We headed slowly to the nearby park that glorious May morning. I thought, Liachico, now you have something to chew. It is something, ~~not right~~. We sat at the little Kaffee there, full of flowers all around. As we waited for our coffee, I asked her. When was the birth. She said, January eighteenth. I made the calculation fast. Nine months before it was April eighteenth, just two weeks before



I had left Vienna and at the time we were with Mizzi nearly every day. Not that I had any doubt. It rhymed together. Look, I thought again, you have a four month old son and you did not know anything about it. ~~And where have~~ <sup>her</sup> you been all these months, I asked again.

It was very dramatic. In her sixth month of pregnancy she lost again her job and after a while she found a part time job as a house servant near her aunt's home. Mitzi returned living with her aunt who resented her pregnancy, but she like the rent money. Mitzi was all alone and isolated in that two million town of Vienna with the <sup>heavily</sup> snowed streets and the cold days. I interrupted; why did you not go to Kaernten, to Villach, to your family? I could never do it, she said. I realized how stupid my question was. Why did you keep the child in the first place, I wanted to know. Because I wanted it, she answered. I was not sure if I ever would see you again. I wanted this baby. I thought, the girl has guts and I let her talk.

She worked up to a couple of weeks before the birth, the beginning of January, when they fired her. Now, her aunt resented her more because of the protruding belly and because she had no money for the rent. It was a snow storm when the strong natal pains arrived that morning of January eighteenth. ~~Then~~ Someone called the ambulance and though it is very well organized in Vienna, it took some time for ~~the ambulance~~ <sup>it</sup> to arrive because of the very slippery streets. Then it could not park right before the house because the snow was piled up high at that side of the street. They managed to bring down and put in the ambulance on a stretcher the moaning Mitzi. The problem was that the baby was already out. <sup>getting</sup> Someone helped her. You could say that this baby was literally born in the street. The woman shivered terribly and they covered her with the three blankets available. They wrapped the naked baby carefully into Mitzi's overcoat. It took them nearly an hour to bring them to "Kinderheim", children hospital.

This "Kinderheim" was and I believe still is, the best maternity institution in the world. A huge building of three or four floors, very wide halls and corridors, all the modern maternity facilities in the middle of a very spacious well kept park. As the ambulance arrived, they took immediate good care of both. Soon the baby was cared and put in bed to have his first sleep in comfort. He was fine. The mother was brought to the emergency intensive care room. She had double pneumonia.

She continued. All new mothers have to get out within a few days, but they kept me there. It took me about two months to be able to stand on my feet, to be again myself, but I was too weak to be sent away. I saw hundreds and hundreds of mothers coming and getting out happily. As I gained my strength, I helped the nurses washing and feeding the children. I had ~~anyway~~ no place to go. No visits at

days ago. Yesterday they let me loose from Kinderheim. <sup>The</sup> ~~Yesterday~~ night I slept at Mrs. Bauer. That's all.

She noticed that tears were in my eyes and said. Now it is alright, Elie, it is O.K. I never felt more guilty in my life. All that happened while I enjoyed the high life, my dancing evenings, the strolling in nice places, the museums, the warmth of friendships and good food and shelter. And she was there apologetic as if she would be the defendant and I the accuser.

I asked, what is his name? Oh, she said, you know, you have to give a name to a baby within the three first days, otherwise they chose a name by themselves. I was an exception and they waited for eight days to ask me. I did not know. I wanted to give him a Greek name. So I gave him the name Alexander. I hope you like it. And you know, she added. I don't know exactly why I came to you. It was not to tell you about the baby. I wanted to see you, I guess.

I said, you know Mitzi, I am in a very difficult financial position right now. I don't know if I can do anything. Her face darkened. I am not asking for anything. You can go your way. I wanted that baby, I have him and I will care for him. She stood up and started to go. It was pathetic. I ran after her and pushed her on the chair to sit. Wait a minute I told her. I want something more. I knew, if she would get away, I <sup>her</sup> would not see anymore.

We remained for a minute silent. Where is the baby now, I asked? In the Kinderheim she replied. Why not with you, I wanted to know? Oh, she said, it is not like that. When you go into the Kinderheim for a birth, no questions are asked, but when you get out, some questions are asked. You see, it is a City Institution. If you have not a decent place to live, a job or an income, if something does not rhyme and adequate care cannot be taken of the baby, then they keep the infant because its welfare is above all. This up to proving you are fulfilling these minimum standard requirements. It is always your baby as long as you don't give it up for adoption. They keep infants there only very few months. Then, if no adoption and the mother is still unable to secure appropriate care to the child, it is given to the care of an other family filling those standards, against a monthly payment and ~~the~~ under the strict supervision of the city. This always up to the time, the mother can prove she can <sup>provide</sup> ~~care~~ herself for the baby. And this can go up to the eighteenth year of age.

I said, I want to see Alexander. How can I do that? Visits are only on Sunday ~~PM~~, three to four o'clock, <sup>PM</sup> she replied. But you must have a precinct police certificate that in the building you live, no one is suffering from a contagious disease. It is a precaution. Can you take care of that Mitzi for me? Yes, I can, she



said. It was a thursday. I saw Mitzi on saturday afternoon. She had to take the few possessions she had from her aunt's house and bring them to Mrs'Buaer place which was near there. We strolled and chatted and sat at a Viennese Gasthaus, a restaurant to have dinner.

Next day, sunday, early afternoon, we met with Mitzi. I was curious about the baby though I felt detached from all that. We had to ride the tramway for over half an hour. The "Kinderheim" building and the auxiliary buildings dispersed all around, the immense green park with benches, impressed me. I had the idea that only few mothers would leave their babies in the institution, but I saw a lot of women and some fathers too, waiting for the clock to reach three. We went up the marble steps of the wide main entrance to a long wide corridor aligned on both sides with high and wide all glassed doors and windows. In the long and <sup>spacious</sup> ~~wide~~ halls inside, immaculately clean, were rows of cradles with babies in them, ~~there were~~ hundreds of them. In spite of the many infants and the many nurses and all the visitors, there was the least <sup>not</sup> noise except ~~heard~~ on the linoleum covered floor as people marched on it. There were similar halls and baby rows in the upstairs floors. Ours was the first floor, however.

A nurse came to us smiling. High Mitzi, she said, how you feel? I hope everything alright. How does the outer world look like? Yes, I will be soon to you with Alexander the First, I tell you, an exceptional boy, he smiles all the time, the quietest baby around.

In a minute she was back, ~~and~~ handed the baby to Mitzi and said: He is philosophical. I would not be surprised if he would end to be a professor. She went giggling. We were sitting <sup>on</sup> ~~one of the~~ upholstered benches along the walls. He looked at Mitzi ~~and~~ ~~he~~ smiled as she talked to him. He was a beautiful and relaxed baby. As I bent to look at him a couple of times, he gave me a furtive occasional glance which seemed to me somewhat ironical, teasing or contemptuous as if he knew something about me. I realized how absurd this thought was. It was certainly my conscience bothering me.

I looked around at the other benches, mothers holding babies, very few men standing next to them. I had the impression that they were mostly lower class people and among the poorest. Some of <sup>the men seemed not to be</sup> ~~them were not~~ very happy sitting there with their babies. Later Mitzi told me that most of those children would come to adoption or placed by the City with foster parents. The best care for such infants ~~generally~~ ~~was~~ was taken in Vienna. Every child born in the "Kinderheim", on birth receive a bulky carton containing everything in garments a baby would need for the first six months or so, all of high quality. This for all, legitimate and illegitimate children. Many married women had their births there, because of the better care.

I sat there and looked at Mitzi and the baby, <sup>They</sup> ~~was~~ had eyes only for each other. I wondered, is that my son, my four months old son? My feelings were confused, mixed. Tenderness, remorse and at the same time detachment. Was I to be concerned? Had I to go back to my good life, the dancing evenings, the strolling in the streets of new towns, reading books and <sup>light dancing?</sup> ~~visiting friends~~? We were there about fifteen minutes, such a long time, when a nurse came to us. Hi Mitzi, she said cheerfully, you know, I am sorry, you have to sign something in the office. If you want, I will hold the baby for you. Mitzi looked apologetically at me and she handed me the baby. I will be soon back. I wanted to take it before, but I did not dare to ask. As he was in my arms clean and neat. I watched intensely at him and <sup>tried</sup> ~~try~~ to talk to him. He lifted ~~up~~ his right hand and caught strongly my cheek. He again smiled and I again had the impression I saw an ironical sparkle in his eyes.

Mitzi returned almost very soon to my liking. For a moment I was reluctant to give her back the baby. She smiled; it's alright Elinko, she murmured, it's alright. Then Alexander was again in her arms. Time passed fast and the time of separation approached. A bell rung four minutes before four o'clock and the nurses started ~~ed~~ collecting babies back. Our nurse came to us saying: I want to have Alexander the smiling, he must be very hungry by now. Mitzi accompanied the nurse and the baby to his cradle inside, which was an exception. I followed them with my eyes through the glassed door. It was a melancholy. What kind of beast am I.

As we walked on the corridor to the exit, I asked Mitzi why do they call him Alexander the first? She replied, there are a couple of <sup>other</sup> Alexanders in that hall and the cradle of our ~~first~~ is just on the head of his row, just behind the door. So, he is Alexander the first. Though not so very <sup>often</sup> ~~much~~, in Austria this name is liked and given to some children.

We got out and sat on a bench. Silently for a while. You know Mitzi, I said, I am very worthy. I am even unable to provide for myself. I am restless and rootless. But I think, I will promise you that much. I will give you the baby to care all by yourself, in Vienna, in Brussels, in Paris, overseas, somewhere. I cannot ~~prom~~ promise anything more now. I don't know how I will do it, but I will try my best. I am so sorry, so sorry. She cried. You have not to <sup>get</sup> out of your way, she said. I told you, I will somehow manage. It's O.K. I said, let's go now some place to sit, may be to Grinzing.

I was at the company's office and Met Mr. Steiner. I had to receive an amount of accumulated commissions which they did not want to pay me because I had interrupted my work for three months, which was a breach of contract for them. They paid



me half of that against and said, we will settle this a little later. Mr Steiner was a gentleman and my problem was with the head of his <sup>office</sup>, a dry spinster in her late forties named Christa who really hated all Jews, including Mr. Steiner. It was obvious, she was a Nazi admirer. I was there a few times more and once I warned Mr. Steiner that some day he will lose everything to Christa and she will not let <sup>him</sup> have a penny out of his business. He told me, he had this business since twenty five years and Christa was with him since fifteen years. May be some day he would sell the business if they would offer him a good price. Three years later I learned, it happened exactly as I had predicted. I don't know what was out of Mr. Steiner after that.

Life went uneasily for me. More Nazis were ~~there~~ now intimidating noisily those opposed and the latter kept their mouth shut, among the ~~latter~~ also Ferdinand. I, as an "Arian" Greek, was not bothered as long as I did not express opinions not to their liking. I was in a neutral position, that is not forced to take a side. I lived always in the room of Hans. He was the best friend I ever had in life. If I was short of money, he never asked. He simply left some on the table before getting out in the morning. On his day off, which was always a week day, he went out with his friends up to the early hours in the mornings, often playing cards or to a theater. He took me always with him. We debated on all kinds of topics and on history. He was well informed on a wide number of subjects through reading and he was intellectually very alert. At Schellenberger's I was acquainted with some other interesting people. Some of them stopped coming there because of the Nazis.

I saw Mitzi every day or second day and every Sunday we went together to see Xandi, as she called the baby. She found a good job with a specialist doctor as a receptionist and house help. He had a wife and a twelve year old daughter. She originated from Germany and from time to time she travelled to visit relatives. He was an old-fashioned doctor in his fifties, widely educated and played the violin very well. Twice a month or so, he invited other doctors for a chamber music concert in his home with a few of them playing classic pieces on various instruments. I got acquainted with Dr. Altman. Mitzi lived in the house.

Now we had the big problem on our lap. On my third or fourth Sunday at the Kinderheim, they called Mitzi and told her that they could not keep the baby more. If Mitzi could not fill the requirements now to take her child, they had to entrust him to an appropriate family against payment, as usual. The problem here was that they had always a list of such foster families on hand, but most of them were in far villages and towns and not in Vienna. The most important thing in the world

for Mitzi was to have the baby near enough to be able to visit and <sup>care</sup> see. If she could locate by herself a foster family of her preference and the "Kinderheim" found them suitable as foster parents, they would agree. They wanted to let the mother to be as near as possible with the child and enable her to take it over some day, but their main concern was primarily that the infant comes to a wholesome place and family, even if this meant an inevitable hardship for the mother.

Mitzi proved very energetic in this. She moved day and night and located an elderly family in the Kumberlandstrasse, in walking distance from Lainz where Mitzi lived. The family was approved by the City and Xandi was given to their care. The couple were around sixty with two married daughters living nearby and a bachelor son who lived in the house, exceptionally kindhearted people. Mitzi could go there at any time she would take away from her job and I was there at least two or three times a week. It was a real break. An inspector came there in every short while and the baby had everything he needed including good medical care. Mitzi bought for him toys and candy.

Mitzi was surprisingly transformed. She was rejuvenated, she bought for herself a couple of nice garments, I added a couple I bought myself for her. She was now content and relaxed. We were as close as it could be we three, including Xandi. I played with him and he got acquainted with me. Mitzi bought him a baby carriage and she strolled with him at the nearby Schoenbrunn Gardens and the Zoo, ~~there~~. She was not supposed to have that right, but the foster people were very understanding. The baby was thriving wonderfully, ~~and Mitzi was happy~~. I avoided to tell officially I am the father because as a foreigner I was liable to pay for the Kinderheim expenses and the upkeep of the child by the city. If I would be unable to pay, they would continue providing and would debit <sup>46</sup> me for payment with interest at any time they would find me with any assets. I was not a permanent resident of the city and not an Austrian citizen. Mitzi was both.

I was often with Johny and Trixie and remained close with them. In spite of their slight sympathizing with Nazism and their aversion to the Jews, we were always good friends. May be if they knew I am Jewish, they would cool toward me. They did not ask me and I did not volunteer telling them, as I did with most of my friends and acquaintances, including my room mate Ha-nz.

It was already August and I thought, I had to leave before the coming of the winter. I wanted to go to Belgium to see if I can settle there and if not to proceed to Paris. In both towns I had already a few Greek friends established since long ~~there~~. In case I would not find both places suitable, I could go to London. I knew many people went there, especially from Germany and there were many Greeks.



As soon as I rented a place and had any kind of job, I would take Martha and Xandi ~~home~~ to me. I was sure, Mitzi could always have a job and she could have the child and her independence. In September I left Vienna. This time the separation was painful. The French say that "partir c'est un peu mourrir", leaving is like a little dying, and we felt like that. Xandi was now eight months old. He liked to sit on my lap or sit on the floor and undo my shoe laces. It was painful.

I was in Prague, Czechoslovakia for two days. I met a gentleman named Goldstein who was a Member Parliament. Prague is a very interesting town. I talked with Mr. Goldstein about my plan to settle some place in Europe. He advised me bluntly to get out of Prague as there is no future for Jews there anymore. He said, he himself planned to get out some day with his family. I don't know if he did.

In Leipzig, Germany, I arrived early morning on Rosh Hashana day. I did not know how to locate a Synagogue and at such a time you could not simply ask a policeman in Germany about that. In the telephone book I found the address of one. I asked the first "Schupo" or policeman I met about the street. It must have been the main Synagogue in town, a beautiful big building. Two policemen were outside and I decided not to enter, at least right now.

I strolled aimlessly for a while when I saw an elderly man, head bent, holding in his right hand the traditional small velvet bag with prayer articles. I followed him. He disappeared into a very wide backyard of a sort of a deserted factory. I hesitated, when I perceived praying voices coming from somewhere. I did not know if I should go inside, but I went. It was in a small naked room with about twenty wooden chairs. a big wooden case in the middle and a primitive pulpit next to it. There were about fifteen people, their shoulders covered with the white Talis, the prayer shawl. As I appeared at the door, all the heads turned to me in frozen fear. I said in Yiddish that I am Jewish "Ich bin a Yid". Someone handed me a prayer shawl and a prayer book. ~~They were reassured.~~ As they started reading out of a scroll, a man asked me if I was a Cohen or a Levi, that is of priestly ancestry. I said, I was not.

The Services were long. It was one P.M. As I went down the wooden stair to the backyard, a man wanted to know if I have any relatives in town and where I was going. As I told him briefly my case, he insisted that I accept the hospitality of one of them. I was brought in a nice house, the man, the woman, two ~~early~~ teenage ~~boys~~ boys and a little girl. I had a good lunch with them. I asked about Jewish life in Germany and they were dispirited, disheartened and scared. The man said, as soon as I can sell the business, we will go. He said, my two older sons are already in London and the older is going to Israel next week.

Nextday, a sunday, we went again to the Synagogue for the second day of the New Year, Rosh Hashana. I was acquainted with a few people and one of them wanted to invite me to lunch. ~~His~~ His family went recently abroad and he remained to liquidate his interests. We ate in a good kosher restaurant. In the evening ~~and~~ after the services in the Synagogue, I was with a pale young man. He was a jobless ~~an~~ assistant professor, very educated. He told me, a couple of years before he received his Ph.D. and was well on his way to a fine academic career when they dismissed him suddenly and without reason. We were a few hours together. He described to me all the sacrifices and the hard work he made to reach his goals and how now the world crumbled together on his head. He was very troubled and frustrated. He brought me to a small Jewish pension-hotel. We ate together there. I wanted to lift his spirits, but I did not know how. In the morning he came to me and accompanied me to the railway station.

I went to Dresden which is very near to Leipzig. This because I had given this town as my postal address and I wanted to see if I had any mail. Dresden is a very pretty ~~and was a very~~ important town full of life at that time. When I was in Leipzig twenty two years later and I wanted to visit Dresden which is less than two hours far by rail, I did not receive permission to do so in the East German Republic. Then I was in Frankfurt, Bonn, Cologne and finally in Brussels. I knew the country and the towns, and I would have no great difficulty to settle down and make a living. The problem was with obtaining a work permit and this matter aggravated much by now with the great influx of immigrants and exiles from several countries and more so from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland. Some of them stayed because they had not any place else to go and others came on temporary basis up to the time to find some other country to go or waiting for papers or even trying to earn their passage overseas, especially to South America. The majority of those people were Jewish, mostly well educated and in the professions. Some again were attracted like butterflies to the glare of light, burning their own wings and finished with the lowest menial jobs to stay alive.

I did not know what to do. One of my Greek friends was importing sweet Wine from the Greek island of Samos, bottling and distributing it. I helped him selling especially at Antwerp which I knew well. It is less than two hour from Brussels by rail. I sold it to some Jewish restaurants and individuals, that is I booked orders and it was shipped from Brussels. After my first month I came in Belgium, my application for a work permit was rejected. I applied again and they gave me fifteen days. My second application again rejected and they gave me another fifteen days. Then they gave me the "feuille de route", that is a notification that at a certain date I had to leave Belgium, ~~and stay in another fifteen~~



~~day of residence~~. It was a pity because at a restaurant <sup>in Antwerp</sup> in the Pelikanstraat, near the diamonds center, I had made a few friends who were willing to help me in business. At the <sup>end</sup> of that residence extension, I went to the "Commissariat" and told them I could not leave because I was waiting for money. They gave me another two weeks. But it was obvious it could not go like that for ever.

I wanted to try France. I knew Paris and had some acquaintances there. But the French too were extremely difficult ~~to~~ in granting visas and more so ~~for~~ subjects of the small Balkan countries. The Consul told me, I would have to wait for three ~~for~~ months until they <sup>had</sup> gathered information about me in Vienna and Greece. Of course ~~they~~ I could not wait that much. So I accepted a fifteen days transitory visa to France to go to Marseille to board a ship, as I said. At the beginning of January 1936 I was in Lille, in the north of France. I had someone I have known in Brussels and had given him shelter for a few days in my room. I had his address and we were an evening together and I slept one night in his room. Next day, Sunday, I was in Paris. My friends, lived in the Port d'Italie, but they had no telephone. I took the subway and went there, but they were not home. I went back at the rue de Mazarin, in the coffee where my Greeks spent most of their free time playing passionately the "belotte", a French card game. My friends were not there I had very little money, enough for cigarettes and one roll of bakery and I was hungry. The typical Parisian dribbly-drizzly rain fell from the sky. The Germans call it "Schnurregen", string rain and sometimes it fell for days, the sky continually cloudy and misty. It was not cold. I walked aimlessly as I always liked to do in the big towns and still like, for several hours at a time.

Something remarkable. I was at the place Odeon and stood before the statue of ~~Danton~~ Georges Jacques Danton, one of the leaders of the French revolution. The famous inscription there is "pour vaincre les ennemis de la Patrie, il en faut trois choses", to defeat the enemies of our land, three things are needed, courage more courage and still more courage. I thought about myself. What is the use? As turned ~~to~~ go, I saw a <sup>silver</sup> ~~shiny~~ coin glittering on the black asphalt. It was a twenty franc piece. Danton was right after all, I mused. I had a good lunch at a nearby small restaurant for five francs.

My friends, four young Greeks from Kastoria, Macedonia, all unmarried, lived together in an apartment. They had there also their primitive workshop doing furrier work. They were ~~buying~~ by the sac the small pieces of Astrakhan hides discarded in the big furrier workshops. Some of these pieces very small, especially the lower parts of the legs which they called "pattes d'Astrakhan". With great patience they matched the small pieces according to curls and natural coloring, sewed them together on the sewing machine and fashioned "cols" <sup>which</sup> neckpieces they after lined with silk. It was a very meticulous and time consuming work.

Early afternoon of every saturday, two or three of them went at the municipal market of the nearby Porte d'Orleans, at the time the market closed. The rabbit vendors skinned the rabbits right there and avoiding the additional work, they simply cut off the lower feet of the animal, les "pattes" and threw them in a particular garbage can under the stand. If you could be there before the sanitation men came, you could have "les pattes". They brought them home, skinned them carefully, stretched the pieces on large timber boards, salted them and let them tan for three or four days. They made "cols" of them, white, fluffy, pretty. It was much easier to work them out though they brought less money. There were usually enough rabbits sold in the market. The young friends made usually also a good soup from the skinned feet.

I found them at home late evening that Sunday and they received me well. ~~that evening I took a little money to buy a ticket to Paris. I had never before~~  
~~before to make connections to Paris. I had never before~~  
~~it never occurred to me to go to Paris. I had never before~~  
I was for one week or so in Paris and I would like very much to stay in that town. I visited the "bureau des etrangers", the office of the foreigners and I was discouraged. No residence and no permit to work. Go abroad and apply with a French Consulate and wait there. I helped my friends a little in their work. They lent me enough money for a railway ticket to Marseille. I did not know how, but I hoped to have some break in that port town.

I was in frequent correspondence with Mizzi and I was always interested to know the latest about Xandi. On January eighteenth, his first anniversary, I sent a small present for him. I missed him, his smile and the ironical teasing eyes. I reached Marseille tired and penniless. I went to the Greek consulate in town and told my story. I was told, the only thing they could do for me was to put me on a Greek cargo for a free passage to the port of Piraeus, provided that I can survive on my own for the next few weeks. I learned that such a cargo goes to Piraeus from Marseille and taking people like me was roughly once a month. All right, I had time to think it over and may be doing something else.

In the huge naked place de Cannebiere, at the port, gathered a lot of people like me, in the great majority, Jews from Germany waiting or searching for an opportunity to travel out of Europe. Some of them had relatives in other countries and waited for authorizations, others had already South American passports they bought even from the consulates of such countries and others simply did not know what to do. All of them had no money and the very little there was, it was shared. That is if someone could buy some food, he shared it with the most hungry. They sat around in groups watching the Frenchmen playing passionately "le boules" throwing a little heavy ball to a certain fixed point.



I could not live out of thin air. I thought, there must be around some Jewish Relief Organization. They had ~~had~~ an old building with eight or ten rooms in two floors, of which the one was the office. The entire house was a dormitory, full of cots one above the other. Every evening only they offered a meal which was excellent for our standards. At the first evening I made the observation that more people ate there than slept on these cots. A young German I got befriended, solved the mystery to me.

My friend was well educated and an artist. He told me he worked for one of the main department stores in <sup>Germany in</sup> ~~charge of~~ the show window decorating and advertising, ~~and he had a number of assistants~~. He had acquired a Chilean passport and waited the opportunity to board a ship. He had left Berlin, his hometown last month because of the pressure by the Nazis and he arrived in Marseille also through Paris and Brussels. Then he told me about the "Capucines":

In a very near suburb there was a monastery of Capucin monks, ~~where~~ <sup>it</sup> was a very wide new ~~large~~ building especially to be a night asylum for indigent and destitute people. It had six or seven floors each converted to one enormous dormitory. The narrow beds were at about five feet of each other and next to each bed was a wooden chair to put your cloths during the night. The first floor was for offices and also for a very large hall serving as a chapel and for conventions and gatherings. Then there was a wide hall with long tables and benches for eating. Here it was the contrary. Fewer people ate and more slept.

At the "Capucines" as people called this place, everything was immaculate. In the dormitory, <sup>where central heating pipes</sup> between three beds, You had not be later than seven o'clock P.M. ~~there~~ and the doors were closed after that. There were always two policemen ~~there~~ in uniform looking at faces. At the small counters at a row you said your name or any fictitious name you wanted. No questions whatsoever asked. You were handed a small numbered placque which would enable you to have bedspreads, a pillow and a blanket, from a depot on each floor. You were told that you can stay for five days free and then you would pay one franc for the night. The cheapest hotel costed seven - eight francs for one night. The idea was to make you to endeavour to earn something. If you had not the one franc after the five days, they did not <sup>know you</sup> ~~through out~~. The man behind the <sup>counter said</sup> ~~customer~~, alright for the evening, but "demain, sans faute", to morrow, without fail, ~~the one franc though~~ <sup>T</sup> "to morrow, the same was repeated. In the evening and in the morning they distributed a "soupe" and I never saw in my life a more meager soup. Pure hot water with no fat or oil and big pieces of white bread inside swimming. Invariably, it was the same "soupe" every evening and morning, at least as long as I was there. Before going to sleep, we had to sit in the chapel and hear a monotonous sermon, always the same. It was futile because the great majority of the people did not know French.

The ideal situation for a Jewish man needing assistance at that time in Marseille was to eat in the Jewish Asylum and sleep ~~at~~ <sup>in</sup> the "Capucines". The problem with the latter was that you had to be ready and out in the street by six thirty in the morning which was rather early in the mid <sup>dle</sup> of the winter. The asylum of the Jews was maintained by an elderly bachelor who could not care for a very thorough cleaning and discipline. You could come late in the evening and wake up later in the morning. At the "Capucines" at every given evening came several hundred people of all races and origins, a humanity ~~at~~ all ages though mostly young, and rarely genuine French. Many North Africans, Senegalese, exiles and refugees from various countries. There were a few Greeks. At the Jewish asylum every evening ~~went to~~ <sup>three men</sup> a luxurious Jewish kosher restaurant and were handed one big pot or caldron full with hot food, presumably what remained there from lunch, and an other smaller recipient with salad, sometimes cheese or something else. We had a long wooden stick which we passed through the caldron's handles and then an a smaller one for the auxiliary pot and brought it to our asylum which was not far. While so many people used the "Capucines", in the Jewish asylum were never more than ~~twenty to thirty~~ <sup>ten to fifteen</sup> people. The turnover was faster, that is people remained not so long. Most of them were dignified people.

The ~~people~~ <sup>men</sup> in the Jewish asylum knew about the "Capucines". Once the secretary asked me, how it was with the "Capucines". I felt embarrassed and replied, fine. He smiled and said, let the "goyim", the gentiles, contribute something. I don't know if the "Capucines" knew about our double life.

So, life went on for about ten days when a curious break came our way. My German friend was not there. He had an uncle or a cousin, I don't know, in Nice and a couple of days before he went hunting for him. Anyway, at the "Capucines" it was nearing midnight and everyone was nicely asleep in the warm clean dormitories when they switched on the lights while a loud shrill voice repeatedly ordered, "tout le monde debout", everyone up. Noise, confusion, panic, we all dressed hastily and ran to the downstairs hall. A trembling young Greek sailor stuck with and wanted to know what happened. Then a man on the pulpit ~~said~~ <sup>asked</sup> loudly: Who wants to work up to the morning for thirty six francs. My Greek did not know French and I translated and all around people were translating to other people. Of course, no one declined the offer. Outside in the darkness a long row of trucks waited and as soon ~~filled~~ <sup>as</sup> they swallowed us, started rolling in great speed, at the head and the end of the column police cars with armed policemen. Soon we were distributed into the various fenced docks. It was sort of eerie.

It was ~~known~~ that at the time in Marseille was a general longshoremen strik but we did not know that we were chosen to be strikebreakers. The situation must



have been desperate to decide to take the night asylum people for that. We all were unskilled. Anyway, we were broken in groups of eight under a foreman and put to work in the innards of the big cargo ships and outside them at the dock. Foremen were not on strike. Soon after a man came and distributed to us small marked steel tin plaques. We were excited, we did what we were told and at six thirty in the morning, we paraded before a low counter and we received in a small envelope our money. It was a lot for our standards.

My and a few other groups, were guided on a luxurious passenger ship and were served a real breakfast in its restaurant by Chinese waiters, as if we were regular passengers. It was a little better than the water soup of the "Capucines". Right there a man came and shouted that anyone who wanted to work for eight hours that day, he would be paid twenty eight francs. All of us found it to be a good idea and went ahead. I was deep in a cargo ship with my team and we ordered the parcels, the cartons and the wooden cases according to the instructions of the foreman. It was not hard work and was fun. Often we waited for fifteen or more minutes for the next load to arrive from upstairs. ~~Often~~ The supervisor complained that we did not as well as he wanted and sometimes we lost time rearranging. He stood in the upper deck and directed us from there. A couple of times, he stopped everything and came down to explain and to show. His responsibility was great because, if the load is not distributed according to weight and bulk, ~~it~~ may cause the big ship to capsize in a turbulent sea.

At four P.M. we finished, again passed through that counter and by giving our marked tin plaque we received the pay. ~~After minutes we started a new working shift, and we were brought again on that ship and had dinner. Then an other man came and told us: Who wants to sleep, he can have a berthe or a cot, but who agrees to work again during the night, he will be paid thirty six francs. If so, one could sleep all day to morrow. Nearly all of us went to work for a second night. I was put outside the ship to unload the trucks as they arrived and to load the nets lifting the goods on the ship. I like it better though I felt very tired. Somehow, we finished our night and made it to a bed after breakfast and slept heavily all day long. All the time we worked there, it was one night, one day and an other night, then one day sleep. It was exhausting though very lucrative for the poor devils we were, without work permit.~~

The French workers are very tough when it comes to political and labor matters. Leon Blum, the head of the Socialist Party was the Prime Minister. The Gendarmerie police which is the Government police was also very tough against the strikers and it caused riots, collisions and casualties. The Mayor of Marseille

assisted the strikers with money and food while the French Government was against them for not accepting its terms to get back to work. The strike expanded to related unions, the truckers, the dispatchers and so forth.

Nobody <sup>among us</sup> could quit the work and get out with the money he had earned. All along the iron fences of the docks, a lot of strikers were aligned shouting at us while ~~armed~~ armed and helmed police stood inside the fences to protect us. It was quite a spectacle. They sent a couple of their own people to work and see if any regular workers were there. We called them "photographers". If they would catch one of their own working, they would tear him to pieces. If they would have in hands one of us, they would not harm him, but they would take away all the money or give him back a little of it. They called us the asylum men.

In ten days or so, the strike somehow ended. Everyone of us had a piece of money in his pockets and the police were afraid that we would be easy targets for robbery. They put twenty or thirty of us on a truck and accompanied us to a near suburb. They told us how to take the bus to down town. Three weeks ago, when I slept the first night at a small Greek hotel, I had left my luggage there. I went straight to the Greek consulate and was told that it happens so that next morning a Greek ship was sailing to Piraeus and if I want, I can board it. I decided to do so. With the money I had, I could buy myself a ticket to some place overseas, but I wish I knew to where. I was also tired and thought much on my promise to Mitzi and Alexander. I had their pictures in my wallet. As next day ~~the~~ my ship was going out and I watched the Marseille skyline, I thought: "Vamos a ver, Liachico," we will see, as my father used to say.

It was such an intensive living with a lot of peculiar details. I remember as I worked inside a cargo ship with my team, four of whom <sup>case</sup> were young blacks from Madagascar, right out of the jungle, they lowered three long wooden cases and while we were waiting for instructions by the foreman above, they sat on them. I read on the top of one of the <sup>the blacks</sup> crates that they contained dead people transferred for burial and told to one of ~~them~~. They jumped wildly shaking and in great terror.

I had a pleasant trip. In Naples Italy we had the entire day and I went in the town. It was the first time I spent an entire day in Italy and found it very interesting. Then, at forenoon two days later, we entered the port of Piraeus which now was one of the main ports in the Mediterranean. I was glad I was in familiar surroundings though not happy, because I did not succeed as I always dreamed, at least materially. I was always in close relation with all of my family and I knew, they would receive me well. Now, my brothers Errico and Moshos had a small nice retail shop of leather articles in down town Piraeus. I left my luggage at a coffee house and went by foot to their shop. They knew I was coming, but not exactly when. We had a happy meeting.



PICKING UP THE PIECES

Those two and half years, the thirty months, since I went the last time on September of 1933 from Greece seemed to be unproductive lost period in my life <sup>putting a</sup> materially once I came back empty handed and would it not be for the strike breaking few French francs in my pocket, I would be so totally bare. But again, as the Greeks had said, From every bad situation, ~~there is~~ some good ~~to~~ derived too. I had <sup>a</sup> matured a little. Any studies and particularly postgraduate ones made abroad, in European country, were much appreciated at that time in Greece. By now my knowledge in Business, imports and exports, banking, customs, shipping and international commerce though still superficial, was somewhat presentable if I <sup>said</sup> ~~said~~ that I studied in Vienna and Germany. My thorough knowledge of French and German made it believable. Along with my good Greek, I could also handle sufficiently English and Italian or at least I could write them well. These ~~four~~ languages were in demand.

At that time in Athens, in which nearly all the main Greek commerce was concentrated, the import - export business was in the hands of a great number of rather small "representative" offices. As I said, you had to <sup>correspond</sup> ~~write~~ in one of the above mentioned four languages and they wrote to you also in one of them. The lack of any formal education proof, made to me very difficult to work for any big company and I did not try to. But in all those smaller commercial enterprises there were no questions, ~~as long as~~ provided that <sup>you</sup> had the necessary knowledge, and I had it. As in most of the world, also the economy in Greece was on a critical level and the salaries low. On the other hand, those small importing-exporting offices had not enough correspondence with abroad to occupy me full time. So I worked in several of them part time, four, six, eight or ten hours a week divided in two or three days. The several small wages I earned made up for a better salary and kept me more independent in everything. I used to go in an office at a certain day, open the drawer of my desk, find some letters received, note underneath fast the contents in Greek, then take other letters or notes from the past time I was there with instructions what to answer. I sat at the typewriter and made the letters fast. In a couple of hours I had finished and went to my next job. In spite of the fact, business was generally bad, I could earn enough for my expenses and hoped to save something for my future plans.

We the brothers and sisters were growing and getting older. The youngest, Leah, was already fifteen. The other girls, Esther was eighteen, Sarah twenty two, Victoria twenty six. Moshos was twenty eight, I was thirty, Errico was thirty five and Pinhas thirty seven. Except Rosa, no one else had married and all living in the house our mother had bought fifteen years before. Now, Errico, was engaged to

Rachel Cohen, the daughter of an oldtimer in our neighborhood. Her mother Sarah, who everyone called Sarota, was a friend of our mother. The father since decades had a small workshop in which he produced the big round brushes on conical wooden heads with holes for whitewashing and painting house walls with lime in which they put some colored ochre. The brushes were made entirely by hand and use of tar. Joseph Cohen was a ~~very~~ religious man. He worked all day with his three sons on the brushes and aside of an occasional family event, they were not appearing anywhere.

Rachel was over thirty years old and a very homely girl. She never went out of her home and neighborhood in all her previous life. Errico was satisfied all our family welcomed her well. It was high noon that the older among us started to get married and have their own lives. Errico and Rachel married in the fall of 1936 and went to live in an apartment owned by the family Cohen. Before the end of that year we knew that Rachel was expecting. It would be the first child of the new generation in our family. Rosa, married since eleven years, was still ~~p~~ childless.

I was in frequent contact with Mitzi. She wrote me the newest about Xandi and sent me photographs. In the fall of 1936, already a year I saw them the last time, I thought to do something about them. To bring them in Athens, ~~it~~ would be the most unfavorable spot for this, but I did not see any other alternative. The boy was already eighteen months old. I did not know to what country I could go. I wished so much to come to America and was already twice at the American consulate. My case was hopeless at that time because of the strict quota regulations and the fact I had not a single relative living in the United States. I felt, my family would be opposed to my living or even protecting a foreign unmarried woman with my own child. I did not think I would get married. It was fulfilling my promise to make her independent and give her the child to care. Xandi was always living with the same foster family in the Kumberlandstrasse in Vienna. An added problem was that now Mitzi had lost her job and worked part time whenever she could find work. The wife of Dr. Altmann where Mitzi worked for over one year, suddenly took her little daughter and went to live in Germany. She was a Christian and the Doctor was Jewish. It was one of those things incurring frequently. I know that this ruined his life.

January eighteenth 1937 was a sad day for me. Xandi was two years old and I missed him. I had already written to Mitzi to prepare to come to Greece with the boy, but it was not that easy. The City of Vienna was very reluctaht to let the boy travel abroad. Mitzi told them, I was the father. She could get out of the country any time, but not the boy without proof and guarantee. The political situation in Austria was getting more and more dangerous with the German Nazis and they already talked about "Anschluss", annexation. I had to do something, and fast.



At the beginning of February, already one year I had returned to Greece, I did two things. First I wrote to Hans Oboril, my room mate in Vienna and best friend to see about assisting Mitzi. He knew people and institutions and he was eloquent and aggressive for what he thought it is right. Second I went straight to the Austrian consul in Athens, a middleaged typical Viennese man and impressed him with my story and a few expressions in Viennese dialect. I asked him for assistance to bring Mitzi and Alexander out of Austria and normalize this thing. As first step he suggested that I make a written declaration that I am the father of the boy. I notarized it and then I let the police ~~to~~ ratify my signature, as requested in Greece. I brought it to the consul who let his office ~~to~~ officially translate it into German. The Greek document together with the translation ~~to~~ ~~document~~ were bound together and the string sealed with ~~stamped~~ red Spanish wax. It became thus, very official. I sent it to Mitzi.

It was only the beginning of it. It took some red tape, many visits and requests at the City of Vienna by Mitzi and Hans during six weeks or so. They finally consented to release the child to his mother to travel abroad. I don't know what the Austrian consul had written to them, but I am sure, he helped. Now I wrote a letter to the Greek consulate of Vienna, asking them to grant to Mitzi and Alexander a one year residence visa in Greece. At that time and in such a case, it was not very easily granted. Hans accompanied her everywhere. At the Greek consulate of Vienna they knew about me as I had a few times to be there for family matters.

Now, we had the problem how to transfer money to Vienna for the rail tickets and expenses. There were foreign currency restrictions in Greece and it was highly doubtful if I would be able to obtain permission for such a remittance. In any case, there was some red tape with it. The Austrian consul was sympathetic. He told me to give him the money and he would see about Mitzi receiving the funds in Vienna through a particular consular appropriation ~~in Vienna~~, whatever that meant.

It was the beginning of May ~~that~~, finally all these difficulties were ironed out. Now I had to see about a place for Mitzi and the boy to live. I could not go to my family for that. I had said about the existence of them to Errico and he had shown understanding. He certainly had told the story to the others. Their silent reaction was negative, repelling, sort of "do what you want and let us out of this". They ignored the subject and I did not discuss it with anyone.

I was always close to my old friend Ajax and his family. He was still unmarried. They lived in a very roomy apartment near Acropolis and they agreed to let Mitzi and Xandi a spare room ~~there~~ temporarily. A good solution. On May twenty

five 1937 they arrived in Athens and we were happy to be together. I was amazed with Xandi whom I did not see since twenty months. ~~That was a long time~~. Now, nearly two and half years old, very alert, lively and cheerful, speaking clearly and well in that singing Viennese German, this tiny blond well behaved boy. It was really something. He was cute and liked by everyone. He had always that ironical teasing sparkle in his eyes and he knew a few songs he liked to sing.

I continued living in our family house and contributed some money at the hands of Rosa who was now the administrator of our family. I did not discuss with <sup>them</sup> anything about Mitzi and Xandi and I did not tell them even that they are already in Athens, but I am sure, they had sensed it. Next month, in June, <sup>Ajax</sup> ~~the~~'s family made their annual transfer to their cottage at the shore in Vouliagmeni, a suburb about thirty miles from Athens. Aside of Ajax, there was a younger brother and a girl with the name of Hara, which means in Greek Joy, then twenty ~~years~~ old. They thought that Mitzi could help Hara learn a fluent German or perfect the little knowledge she had in it. So Mitzi, whom everyone now called <sup>her</sup> original name Martha, transferred with Xandi also to Vouliagmeni. I was glad first because it gave her a respite ~~to her recent troubled times in the best of~~ <sup>in the best</sup> places, a nice resort and also a three months time to see what to do. I passed all weekends in Vouliagmeni and I was there also every afternoon wednesdays up to ~~the next~~ <sup>the next</sup> morning. Most of the days she cooked separately for her and Xandi and I took care about the groceries and everything else. Martha is a very good swimmer and likes the water very much, up to now. The cottage was rather primitive with fast no modern facilities, but mother and child were happy to be in that soothing place. All three of us had long walks. They made many friends.

Our father used to say that "contra la verdad no hay fuerza", you cannot fight against the truth or for that matter reality. ~~Kids of it and have always been~~  
I was in the best of terms with my family while I had a second one to care and leave ~~was~~ both strictly segregated from each other. On a sunday afternoon I was strolling with Martha at the crowded beach while holding Xandi in my arms when I suddenly met with my brother Moshe and his five or six friends, who were also my friends, strolling. I was very embarassed and so was he. I had never said a word about Martha and the boy and I was always so very close with Moshos, as we called him, who was the closest to my age, only two years younger. I could say only, that is Mrs. Martha and this is Alexander. As I turned to the boy, I thought for a moment, I saw in his eyes that humorous smart aleck expression, or it may be it was only my impression. Moshos looked at the boy attentively for a while. I knew, questions were hanging on his lips and those of the friends. None was asked and we said goodby.



Martha and Xandi came in Greece as "visitors". I received for them a three month residence when I registered them with the <sup>Aliens</sup> ~~Foreigners~~ Police. I was confused about the future. I knew that I would have all kinds of problems unless I can manage emigrating to an other far country. In the first place I felt that my family would not easily get reconciled with such a situation and for that matter also not the society I lived in, the neighborhood and all. Though already somewhat modernized, most of our world was still puritanical. I tried and I could not find the solution to this. In 1937 the air was filled with tension and suspicion and regulations and restrictions, economical, political and other. I felt the pressures upon me coming from all directions. I thought, if I ~~stay~~ must stay, I will fight. I obtained an other three month residence extension for Martha and Xandi.

In the fall, when Ajax and family returned to their Athens' residence, I could make an arrangement with a ~~family~~ doctor I knew several years. He had a small outpatient clinic with two or three other doctors and ~~he~~ practiced medicine only there. He lived ~~alone~~ alone in a spacious apartment down town he used mostly for sleep and study. We agreed that Martha could have a room for her and the boy against keeping the apartment clean and noting on a pad the rare incoming phone calls. To this I made Mitzi to memorize the few necessary words and sentences in Greek. The doctor knew only French and no German. He never had visitors and it seemed no social life at all. He did not take his meals home except in a few cases that Martha prepared something "viennese" and she invited him ~~home~~ to it. He was very conscious ~~with~~ everything medical, reading a lot, caring too much about cleanliness, microbes, bacteria and what have you. It was a break for me, gave me time and was not costly.

An afternoon, when I was not there, my sister Sara, we all called Rina, appeared at the doctor's home to see Martha and Xandi and brought some presents. It was nice though communication was quite impossible because of the language barrier. From what Martha told me I could not get wise and Sara or Rina, did not want to discuss it when I attempted to talk about it. Though it seemed a kind of exploratory gesture, it was agreeable because spontaneous. The ice was not broken, but at least the matter was now on the table. Half of my nights I lived in our family home where I had also most of my meals and two or three nights a week I was with Martha. I could not stay all the time with her because it was not in the arrangement with the doctor though he mostly did not notice my presence, ~~because~~ <sup>he</sup> he came usually late in the evening and got out early in the morning.

Since "last year", that is since 1936, Greece was under the rightist dictatorship of General Metaxas. It was very totalitarian with Nazi leanings and some absurd principles and slogans like about the "Third Greek Civilisation" as against the "Fourth Reich" <sup>of Germany</sup> and the next thousand years of progress under the new regime.

I could not find out what was the second Greek Civilisation between the first of antiquity and the third they proclaimed. Though led by the military and rigorously pursuing anyone dissenting at the slightest, they <sup>were</sup> much more humane than the German dictatorship. In any case The Metaxas Regime was borrowing ideologically amply from the Hitler regime copying much from it, except persecuting Jews.

I had the third three month residence extension from the Foreigners Police for Martha and Xandi. I was befriended with the head ~~of~~ of the particular department. He was a mildmannered man nearing fifty and still a bachelor. He was for long years with the Gendarmerie and had brought it to captain. Now he was with the town police and in the ~~Foreigners~~ <sup>Aliens</sup> Department. He knew Martha, he liked very much Xandi and we were all together a few times. So, we had no problem with the ~~Foreigners~~ <sup>Aliens</sup> Police which was very strict with foreigners at that time.

At the beginning of 1938, the doctor left his apartment and went to share an other apartment with one of his fellow doctors. For a couple of months I had a room for Martha and the boy in the apartment of a friendly couple. In the spring I rented for them a small apartment in a good neighborhood, very near to Zappion and the Royal Garden. At last, it was keeping my original promise to Mitzi, to give her the boy and make her independent from any institution. What was missing here was that she had no permit for work which for the time being was not so important. Everything was "temporary" as always I had the idea of getting away from Greece, all three of us. Only I did not know how, where and when.

Xandi had a new name. In spite of the friction between Martha and my sisters, Xandi was accepted into their hearts. One after the other of my sisters had occasionally met with Martha. In the summer of 1938, I simply said to my sisters and brothers that I will bring Martha and Xandi in our home. Nobody said yes or no and I did it. Then for a few times again. I wanted to sweeten their pill. In our family with all of them unmarried and not even Rosa having a child, Xandi was the first descendant ~~and of the family~~ <sup>a Sevilla.</sup> With our people, the first male grandchild had to take the first name of his grandfather. So, the first time I brought Martha and the boy home, I called him Leon and since then this remained his first name. Everyone liked it. Errico and Rachel had already a child in summer of last year, just a couple of months Martha and Xandi arrived from Vienna. It was a girl and they name her Lisa, for our mother.

The year 1938 was more difficult in all aspects, ~~than the last one.~~ In March Germany proceeded to the forced annexation of Austria. The national economy in all of Europe got from worse to worse and so it was in Greece where the dictatorship became more rigid. It was clear that World ~~war~~ <sup>conflict</sup> was coming soon. I accepted the fact that I could not manage emigrating to an other country right away and resolved to wait for the next break.



Even the <sup>Aliens</sup> Foreigners Police got impatient. The chief, a police colonel named Mr. Vlastaris, a smart and energetic middleaged man called me in his office for a rather friendly talk. He told me, we know all the story, we know that you are a honest man with a honest past. I can't understand you. You have there a good woman and you have such an adorable boy. We know that you are very close to them and that you care. It is a perfect case. Why coming here each time and beg for an other residence extension? Why don't you marry her and give also a name to the boy? Or do you believe, you may find a better woman? Do you need any assistance? I will give it to you. Now, I cannot tell you whom to marry, but I have to tell you that if it goes on like that, it will end for us ~~by~~ sending mother and child back to Vienna, and there are the Nazis by now. I give you an other six months extension of residence. I am not so sure if I will be able to give an other one. Think it over. I said, thank you, I appreciate it, I will.

Everything was not as smooth as Mr. Vlastaris had put it. There were problems to solve and above all the religion. In Greece no civil marriages were performed. Martha had to convert to Judaism and she had no objection whatsoever. Ther Xandi, whom everyone by now called Leon, had to be circumcised. It was then unimaginable that a Jewish boy would be deprived of that. In Athens there was no possibility of doing both. And there were a number of other difficulties, family, community and other. But I decided to face the music.

In Athens lived relatively few Jews, about four thousand souls in all. The main Jewish center in Greece was Salonica, the capital of Macedonia in the north with about two hundred thousand residents of which nearly sixty thousand were Jews of homogenous sephardic origin with a long history and all the traditional institutions. Most of the industry and commerce was in their hands and they prospered. I went to the only rabbi in Athens, told him my story and asked him for a recommendation letter to the chief rabbi of Salonica. He gave it to me. In November of 1938 I, Martha and Leon went to Salonica by rail, about four hundred miles from Athens. The Chief Rabbi accepted to settle those two matters, conversion and circumcision provided that in a very few days I teach Martha something about Jewish holidays and the "Sema" the main prayer. As Jews never did encourage conversions to Judaism and so is up to present, this was the most the chief rabbi could do to convene the traditional "Beth Din" the religious council judging on such matters.

We stayed at a small clean hotel and it was like a vacation. In a few days the "Beth Din" convened, remarkably fast as it goes. Before going to it, Martha had to pass through the ritual bath, the "Mikvah". She was accepted by the "Beth Din" and a conversion certificate was given to us. With it any rabbi could perform the marriage. Now we had the matter with the circumcision which could be made only in this town of all Greece.

The Hirsch hospital in Salonica was one of the best in Greece, best equipped and staffed with the best personnel. It was a purely Jewish hospital, the only of the kind in the country, though they treated also gentiles, especially more for delicate surgery. Nearly all of the doctors had studied abroad, in Germany, Austria or France. Most of them were young. Our case was exceptional, performing a circumcision on a boy nearing his fourth birthday. Though it is a minor surgery, it requires some skill. Quite a number of such operations get to be performed around the world for religious or other reasons, on adults in various ages. It was seemingly the first made in that hospital. It is a very important element in the Jewish religion. I have read some place that in ancient Israel, pilgrims to the Temple in Jerusalem coming from abroad to worship, could not enter the main temple if they were not circumcised. They had to remain "ante Portas", outside the gates.

Six young doctors, all of them knowing well German, took Leon from us and reassured Martha. Among themselves they spoke the traditional Spanish as all the Jewish people in town since centuries did. The surgery took only minutes and we received back a lively little boy. They gave instructions to Martha what to do about changing bandages, sterilizing and the like. Everything was smooth, no suffering and in a few days all was perfect.

Back to Athens. My family must have known the reason all of us went to Salonica. Now I told them. My brothers were sympathetic, some of my sisters were not, especially Rosa not at all.

I will break here the narrative to say something about my sister Rosa. As I mentioned, she had married Moshe Habib, the first born <sup>of</sup> son Leon Habib. Moshe was a copy of our Pinhas in behaviour and lower I.Q. ~~and~~ <sup>for the other</sup> each one of them was the only friend ~~at~~ <sup>they</sup> ever had. The only difference seemed to be that Pinhas liked to go to the theater, always alone, while Moshe Habib denied to himself even that pleasure. He compensated by being a shade more religious than Pinhas. Though rarely, they sat alone in the coffee house ~~chatting~~ <sup>chatting</sup>. I never found out about what it was a very rare day they were seen playing cards, always among themselves. As with Pinhas, so it was with Moshe. Each had brothers and sisters with modern tastes and a social life. As long as they did not bother anyone, nobody bothered them and as they were both the oldest children of each family, they enjoyed some degree of reverence.

Pinhas had his umbrella repairing trade, during the rain season very busy, in spring basking in the warming sun on a chair outside his small shop and in summer trying to survive repairing a few of those huge multicolored beach umbrellas which were heavier than himself with his short frail frame.



The case of Moshe Habib was peculiar. It seemed that all his life he was in the same line of work, peddling spices. To my knowledge, he was the only man in our Jewish neighborhood, doing this and in this manner. It was a ~~work~~ <sup>business</sup> like any other to make a living and it was a riddle to everyone that he remained in it all these years and was content with the poor living it yielded. His brother Shimon had already a modern little shop down town making a good living and his other brother Isaac from a peddler in textiles had advanced to a ~~seller~~ salesman in fabrics. He proceeded in this manner:

He invented peddling in spices. He had a shoe carton box full of small handmade paper bags of various sizes, filled with small quantities of all kinds of spices, ground black pepper, ground cinammon, cloves, vanilla powder, bayleaves and some other exotic things. In the morning he would go to a different far neighborhood to peddle his wares from house to house. It was very tiresome, but it was a peddler's dream regarding weight of the goods, the thing that broke the back of all the other peddlars. An easy way to mediocrity and starvation.

I could not visualize why a housewife would buy such small quantities of spices from an unknown peddler while she could get them at the small corner grocery store? Was it because the spices of the peddler were considered to be fresher? I think, there is something psychological in it. Buying something of low cost from someone who knocks your door, is something like helping ~~some one~~ <sup>him</sup> and it makes you a sort of benefactor. Next month you would buy again something of little value ~~xxx~~ out of his shoe box and it became a kind of habit. Take black pepper. Because it was a rather expensive product, it was used rather sparingly. As people learned to use it more and pepper increased in price with the time, to ~~make~~ <sup>make</sup> the cost accessible to the housewife, all pepper sold by the peddler or in the grocery store, was "cut" with something else black and harmless. The result was the same because you had to put more in your bean soup to give it the right peppery taste. ~~He had a good name and was respected~~ <sup>He had a good name and was respected</sup> "Telefunken", as Moshe was nicknamed, bought a quantity of pepper or cinammon by weight from one of the few importers, "worked it out", ~~he~~ put it in small enveloppes <sup>weighing</sup> the small quantities by eye and he was ready for business. He never invited me or to my knowledge anyone else into his laboratory-kitchen.

Divorces in our community were extremely rare, even unthinkable. After about ten years Rosa and "Telefunken" were separated. He simply went to live in the house of one of his married sisters. Three years later they had an official silent divorce. Rosa became again a Sevilla as she started using only our family name. Moshe Habib continued selling spices in the shoe box in far neighborhoods as he continued to be the only friend of Pinhas, our brother. No bitterness whatsoever.

Since the death of our mother in 1930, Rosa devoted and dedicated her life to the upbringing of our four younger sisters and she did a wonderful job sacrificing her comforts and life pleasures. Her husband often complained that he had no wife of his own once that Rosa became the mother of her sisters. For year her husband ate at our table everyday. I don't know what the family would do without Rosa.

Now, as we were back from Salonica, I had to arrange for my marriage to Martha. All my sisters, as I said, were silently opposed to this. They did not say openly so, but it was evident. I did not care much about that. I knew, I have no alternative and I wanted it. So some time on December I went to the rabbi to set a date. I did not tell anyone and I did not want anyone there. I felt terribly embarrassed. On Sunday afternoon, <sup>of January first 1931</sup> at the time of the evening prayers, the Minyan, I was there with Martha and little Leon. The only relative present was my cousin, Errico Weinberg, the goldsmith, whom I asked to be there and to bring the wedding rings. The ceremony was very short and simple. Just an hour before that, I was with Martha and the boy in our family home, but did not tell them anything. Next morning Rosa came at the small apartment I had rented and brought a few things, some bedspreads, pillow cases, blankets and the like. I was not there. The same afternoon I went to the family home to take a few of my personal possessions. The sisters were there and were distressed I had not told them about the marriage. I said, they don't understand and that I was very sorry which I really was. It is sad that for a long time to come they did not really accept this marriage at their heart though this never came openly on the surface.

Now, Martha was a Greek citizen and an untouchable. At least there was my promise. Though the times were critical and I could not earn more than covering our elementary needs, we were happy. Martha was good friend with all my brothers and strangely enough more with Pinhas who needed <sup>accepted her</sup> ~~it~~ most.

A friend of mine had a small licenced import office and we planned to work together as partners in developing commercial representations of manufacturers of abroad, a business in which I was already specialized. In spite of the worsening international situation after the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Nazis in March of 1939, I went ahead with this partnership while I continued temporarily working part time in various offices to earn a living up to the time we could earn enough to sustain ourselves. We were short of <sup>finance</sup> ~~money~~ and time, as it came to pass.

My sister Victoria was now twenty nine and became engaged to Victor. His family was next door neighbour since before I was born. I knew his parents, now ~~de-~~ceased since long. He had only <sup>two</sup> ~~one~~ sisters. He was a shoemaker, then a peddler, then a shoe salesman at the shop of one of his sister who was married to a man <sup>with</sup> ~~who~~



a shop selling low priced shoes. Victor never went to school as some kids in our town did. Somehow, living in a big town, it did not make much difference from the majority of the others like myself who had only two or three years of formal schooling in all. The main difference was that those who had even that little elementary education could read the newspaper and write somehow a letter. They could learn some more from practice in life, like making an addition or multiplication. Victor was ~~more~~ more mediocre than most of us.

He was now thirty eight and a bachelor. He was very self centered to the point of emptiness. He had an excellent voice of tenor and as he frequented often ~~to~~ the theater like most of us, ~~he~~ <sup>he</sup> could sing beautifully arias from classic operas, better than anyone around. Though he liked much to sing, he liked to be begged to do it and he <sup>relished to be</sup> ~~was in~~ gatherings and parties. ~~He relished~~. He had a natural talent of a comedian, mimicking and imitating voices, mannerisms, types of people. He was approached by talent scouts and offered a scholarship to study and cultivate his <sup>tenor</sup> voice for opera singing and ~~as a~~ <sup>as a</sup> ~~being an~~ actor. He loved both, but nothing came out of it. They offered him real opportunities to reach for goals through hard study and work, but they did not beg him hard enough and seemingly he did not like much the idea of hard effort. He liked very much to be flattered and praised for his singing. This mentality still exists with him. For all that he always was an agreeable man to be with, humorous and sociable. He liked to dress well like all of us ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> was one of us, ~~only a degree~~.

Victor and Victoria were a good match in the sense they fitted each other. They married in spring of 1939. Rosa had gathered a dowry for Victoria in house furnishings and money, as customary. They found to rent a wonderful apartment in a recently built house. It was more roomy and more expensive that they wanted. It was in Thission, just where was the leading avenue to nearby Acropolis. They asked me to share the apartment by using one room and the kitchen to alleviate the burden of their rent. It was a much better place for us and the boy and thought that it would bring us closer to our family. Everyone adored little Leon. It was not a very wise move. We had ups and down, days of friction and days of some tolerance. The sisters and especially Rosa considered Martha as a temporarily necessary fact and Martha subconsciously fought back. But it never came to an open conflict, a clash.

The political and financial situation ~~in the world~~ was deteriorating by leaps and bounds in the world and more so in Europe. My importing activity was showing some promise in spite of all. In august the political tension mounted everywhere. On ~~first~~ <sup>first</sup> September Germany invaded Poland with ~~the~~ <sup>Blitz</sup> speed. Next

day France declared war against Germany and so did England a day after. In the evening of that first of September. Thission square and Acropolis avenue were flooded with lights, the open coffee houses and taverns full of people, a lot of pedestrians, the radio loudspeakers screaming the latest news, a merry carnival insouciant atmosphere. People did not realize what it was. They felt detached. Poland and Germany and France and Russia with their pact with Germany, <sup>were</sup> ~~they were~~ very far and nobody was concerned with. Only a matter of curiosity.

At a table outside a coffee house I spotted my cousin Kouli (Jacob), Weinberg sitting with a few of our common friends. He was now thirty one and had his <sup>Own</sup> ~~own~~ small workshop for leather articles with a partner. He invited me to sit with them and everyone knowing that I lived in various places of Europe, ~~I was~~ asked what I think about this war. I don't know how, I told them that in spite of the predictions that it will be a short war, I am sure it will last many years and I added, days will come many people will suffer cruelly and that all those unconcerned people making there a good life, sipping wine or enjoying their ice cream, will weep and cry in dispair. I was indignantly dismissed as a fool, but I sensed how far the Nazis would go and how strongly the other world would resist the German arrogance and tendency for utter destruction, abolishon and replacement of existing values by fire and blood. That evening I felt so very unhappy.

Victoria was right away pregnant, now in her sixth month. But the real news was that Martha was pregnant too, in her second month. It was truly not the right time for a pregnancy, especially for me and Martha because we understood the times a little better. What was bad was that automatically, every import activity was cut out as by a huge knife, leaving me entirely jobless, except for a few private lessons in languages I had. Alone, they were giving me a very poor living.

In November, as my savings were depleting and the future looked gloomy, war, pregnancy and all, I ~~had~~ a break, one of those breaks in crisis. An exporter of dried raisins, olive oil and carobs, the so-called locust beans, was looking for a trained office man with knowledge in languages and experience in foreign commercial correspondence. Someone recommended me to him and I was chosen among several others after I submitted a memo in five languages, including Greek. The business was in Iraklion, Island of Crete. A good salary, they would help us to rent a one family house and settle down. In December we sailed on a stormy sea to Crete. Iraklion was a pretty town of about fourty thousand people, an industrial center as well as commercial for a vast agricultural province rich in the production of fruit and vegetable. I was never there before, though I had often visited the islands of the Ionian sea, I was never in the Aegean sea. This longshaped island of four hundred thousand inhabitants, has the longest history in Greece. It



was the seat of the Minoan civilisation, a highly sophisticated people who suddenly disappeared from history.

It was a break. We were glad getting finally out of Athens. We <sup>had</sup> a big house near the sea, good food and a quiet life. We made many friends. The company I worked for, was owned by four brothers who invited us often in their homes. It was a prominent family with twelve adult children, ten of whom were male and most of them lived right in that town. Two were lawyers. Though the international situation steadily worsened, we felt little of that. The real problem was that business became highly risky and nearly impossible. The seas started to be dominated by the German submarines hampering communications. Most of the Cretan exporters stopped exporting "for the time being". My company was very daring. Especially they made a large shipment of yellow dried raisins to Lithuania, against my advice, and they never heard even what happened to the carrying vessel. We knew only that the raisins reached Lithuania. Nothing else. Even postal communications were cut out. They never received any money from that and efforts I made after the war, remained fruitless as Lithuania was ~~attacked~~ <sup>annexed</sup> by Russia.

A couple of weeks after we left Athens, Victoria had a little girl. They called her Sarah which was the name of Victor's deceased mother. They nicknamed her Nina and so it is to this day. In the town of Iraklion ~~there~~ were only three Jewish families, a man who had a good going textile shop, an other who was a peddler and a third middleaged man who sat before a low bench at a street corner repairing shoes. The man with the shop, was a portly handsome man named Elias Cohen. He had a beautiful wife and three pretty children four to eight years old. As he was connected with the big textile shop in Athens of Moshe Asher whom I know well, we became good friends.

Life went on. I had a few students in French. One of them paid me in olive oil and other produce. I sent to Rosa some olive oil regularly as the Cretan quality was excellent. The time of truth for Martha approached. In town were two obstetricians. One of the Galenianos, the people who owned the company I worked for, recommended to me Dr. Lignos. He saw a couple of times Martha and it seemed normal. He had a small private clinic, two rooms downstairs as offices and for equipment and two or three rooms on the second floor for the births. They were very often occupied as women of more affluent people came in and went out in a couple of days. Lesser means people had their babies born in their homes with the help of more or less capable midwives or simply of a neighbor woman. As peasant women worked often harder than their men, right up to the last day of pregnancy, there were cases of births in the midst of hard labor in the field.

An evening in March, I came home a little late after giving a lesson. I

saw Martha in discomfort and pain. She was always very brave to physical pain. I did not know anything about prenatal pains. I asked her if I have to call the doctor. She said, not yet. We had no phone at home and I had to get out to find one. I could also run to the clinic and in ten minutes to be there. Martha insisted, not necessary, sit down to eat, she said. Then she urged me to sleep. If I knew better, I should go promptly for the doctor. I analyzed it later. It was a sort of unnecessary sacrifice and Martha, all along, exaggerated and overdid it often.

After midnight she had pains in intervals. I could not understand the situation. Several times I wanted to get to the doctor and she insisted, not yet necessary, in the morning. She thought about the dark streets and doubted if I could reach the doctor that late after midnight. I should have realized how dangerous it could be.

With the first daylight breaking out, I rushed to a nearby coffee house to call Mr. Lignos. I could reach him at the clinic. For God's sake, he exclaimed. Why did you not bring her here immediately when the pains started. Now hurry, he added. It took me some time to ~~order~~<sup>have</sup> one of the few taxis in town. As I returned home I saw a very pale Martha, bent in half with strong pains, moaning, making the beds and cleaning house. Are you crazy, I asked her? I wanted to leave a clean house, she said. I had great difficulty to bring her down the staircase to the street.

It seemed like a great adventure. Every birth is one. It contains risk and drama with tangibles and intangibles, expected and unexpected. Soon I knew about the seriousness of our case. The doctor told me, she was "dry", that is sometimes during the night the "fluids" were out. She knew about it and she did not tell me or explain to me in time how serious a matter was. I remembered what my father once told me about his own birth in similar conditions.

Hour followed hour and no birth. Unbearable pains and high pitched screams. A woman was brought in the next room and in a couple of hours her new born was heard crying. Evening came and no birth. The doctor made a sketch on a piece of paper to explain to me what was. The head of the baby was <sup>approximately</sup> at the right position for the exit, but it was stuck some where at the pelvis and struggled frantically to free it and get out of there. It had only to turn it by fourty five degrees or one eighth of the circle. I cannot do anything. It has to turn by itself. In every ten or fifteen minutes he or the nurse put the stethoscope to hear the hearts of the mother and the baby and every time they said, it goes strong.

Again hour followed hour painfully. Midnight came and passed. Martha was



miserable. I was amazed with her endurance. The intensity of suffering of the strong pains after the few calm moments in between was so intense that you felt all the misery of it on your body by being there. The dawn of the new day <sup>came</sup> ~~there~~. She was on that bed since twenty four hours and ~~started~~ the pains started ten hours before that. The doctor said, <sup>incredible</sup> ~~unbelievable~~, an unusual case. Every few minutes he was hearing the heart <sup>beat</sup> of the baby under the protruding belly. ~~Then~~ He told to the nurse to prepare some tools which she aligned on a white towel. He told me, just in case, if it goes so for long, we must bring it out, so or so. At seven o'clock the doctor said. We will give it half an hour more. At seven thirty he said. We will give it an other half an hour. At eight o'clock he said. The baby goes so strong. We have to give him a little more. All night we were there with the doctor and we talked about his studies in France and about Paris and the ~~people there~~ French.

~~It was~~ That wonderful spring morning of March fourteenth 1940 when the war sunshine came through the windows and hugged the bed of that suffering woman. ~~At~~ A few minutes after eight o'clock, I was outside the room at the corridor, before a large window. The doctor went to the next room to see a woman just <sup>brought by</sup> ~~arrived~~. In Martha's room was the nurse listening to heart beats for the thousandth time. Suddenly the door opens, the nurse runs wildly to the room where the doctor was. Both run back to Martha's room and close the door. I don't dare to move. For long minutes, no moans, no screams, absolute silence. Oh God, I thought, is this the end. Again the door opens, the nurse runs downstairs and in a moment she returns with something in her hand. I am there <sup>there</sup> ~~frozen~~, petrified. Again minutes of painful pass. The nurse comes out of the room running to somewhere. She shouts to me, congratulations, it's a boy. The heavens open as I hear the baby cry. She comes back and says. What are you standing there? Get in? Don't you want him? It was such a speedy sequence. I am like hypnotized. I see as they clean the baby and I am terrified with the shape of his head, like a long watermellon. Mr. Lignos says, don't worry, it is only a pocket of blood. The body will absorb it within twenty four hours. He is very strong willed and it will be something with him in life. Remember I said it, <sup>he added.</sup> ~~in half an hour~~ The belly was gone, the pains were gone. Martha had a glass of milk and something to eat and she fell asleep while the boy slept peacefully on the small cradle next to the bed, content that he made it after all.

I went out to the spring day. It was beautiful. It's a boy, it's a boy.

It was a saturday. I went to the family where I had left Leon yesterday morning. He was now five years and three months old. I told him, he has a brother. Then I ~~went~~ sent a telegram to the family in Athens. I brought Leon to Martha. Later,

as we sat with the doctor in his office downstairs and sipped coffee, he said. You know, it is remarkable with your son. His head was stuck and he worked desperately all the time to move it that one eighth of the circle. He could not. At the end, he abandoned the effort and started working to the opposite direction, for the three eighths of the circle. The decision was smart and he made it. If he would continue for the direction of the one eighth, he may have never made it. The decision of change is not as simple as you may think. Remarkable. And your wife is tough, a mountain woman. I know those people. I was there. Now, he added, I have to catch some sleep. Have a good lunch and take a nap yourself. You are not needed anymore here around. I did just that.

At the evening of that glorious day, I went with Leon to the clinic. The baby was always asleep. Martha exhausted and content. I left her to have a good rest after two nights of such a turmoil. Next morning I was again there. Martha had no milk. The doctor said, in a few days she may have, as she will recover from that ordeal. A woman who had a birth last day also, had too much milk and was anxious to give some away breastfeeding our baby. He had his fill all the three days more he was in the clinic.

Martha and the baby came home. She recovered physically amazingly fast and took over the house. She had milk though not enough, but she ~~was~~ trained well during her stay at the Kinderheim in Vienna and especially in baby nutrition matters, formulas. She kept precise times of feeding, bathing the baby, keeping the baby's room immaculately clean, well aired, darkened when the baby slept, no feeding during the night, no taking the baby every time ~~he~~ cried. As the baby became one month old, she took him on his cart at sunrise at the shore for a walk she brought him back, fed him and put him to sleep. When I was up at seven thirty or eight o' clock, all that was done. She washed herself the diapers by hand and she did not tolerate anything less than ~~immaculately~~ <sup>perfectly</sup> clean.

We had now the matter of the circumcision. In a town called Canea, about sixty or seventy miles from Iraklion, the town we were living, there was an old organized Jewish community of about one hundred families. I inquired there as to whether we could have the Mohel, the rabbi performing circumcisions, to come to our town. The ritual time of eight days after birth passed and in cases of "beyond control" it is allowed. The baby was one month old when on a sunday afternoon the rabbi from Canea arrived. The other problem was that we had not ten males to form a Minyan. We had only two Jews, Mr. Elias Cohen and the other one. The shoe repairer did not appear. I could not import ~~eight~~ <sup>six</sup> Jews for that. It was also "beyond control". There were a few Christians who came more out of curiosity. The Mohel, after slapping, pinching and examining the baby, he performed with dexterity.



There was only one name we should give our second boy. We named him Daniel. My two boys were the only younger descendants in our family. All my brothers and sisters were glad for our decision.

I received a letter from my good friend Hans Oboril which impressed me painfully. After Martha arrived from Vienna in 1937, I continued to correspond regularly with Hans and described him everything with Martha and Xandi. In 1938 he wrote, he intended to go to Barcelona, Spain where his brother was and had a Viennese restaurant. I gave him ideas about how to travel and the like. Then I received letters from him from Barcelona which I answered. In 1939 he went to Madrid where he had some kind of a clerical position at the German embassy, which has astounded me because I knew him as a very liberal man who never could become sympathetic to the Nazi philosophies. Now, the letter I received ~~in 1939~~ from him was praising highly the Nazis and vilified everyone else and especially Jews. ~~He did not know I was Jewish.~~ I was disgusted. I <sup>wrote</sup> ~~replied to his letter and told~~ him how I felt and <sup>that</sup> I was surprised to know of his enthusiasm with Hitler, the war and the racist expressions against Slavs, Jews and anyone who was not of pure Arian stock, as <sup>he</sup> ~~they~~ said. I never heard from him since then. After the war I tried to reach him at his brothers' address in Barcelona of eight years before. A few times I was in Vienna after the war and up to present, I thought about him and tried to locate him in vain. He has been a very good friend to me in times of distress.

That summer of 1940 ~~it was bad~~ <sup>the</sup> Germans just invaded and annihilated Belgium and mighty France which ceased to be independent nations any more. The only Nation fighting bravely alone was England and everyone expected that she too would succumb soon. The historical perspective was very gloomy. The export business was at a total standstill and I certainly could not have any future in Crete. My contract with the Galenianos company was for one year and valid up to end of October. A big problem now for Greece was with Italy which recently entered the war on the side of the Germans. Suddenly an Italian submarine in August torpedoed and sank a Greek navy combat vessel at the island of Tinos for no reason. Then they claimed from Greece certain territorial concessions. The head of the Government, General Metaxas, answered with the famous "ochi", no. On October Twenty eighth, Italian troops invaded Greek places in Epirus, Greece. It was war between Greece and Italy, not with Germany.

One month before, on one of the very last ships serving passengers from Crete to Greece, I sent Martha and the two children to Athens. Daniel was six months old. I remained back to settle matters and dissolve our home. A few days after their departure, something extraordinary happened.

I lived all alone in that little town of the island, isolated from friends and relatives, without any livelyhood, the country in war and the communications with the mainland cut off. An evening I was eating alone at a little open air restaurant when Elias Cohen appeared hastily and sat at my table. He had a piece of paper in his hand written in French. He said, he searched everywhere to find me. The man knew French. It was addressed to "The Jewish Community of Iraklion" and it was a desperate plea for help. It said, a large cargo ship was somewhere there outside the harbor under quarantine, <sup>with</sup> approximately two thousand Jews starving to death, the ship immobilized because it was out of coal since a few days, and please someone may come to us. They had not even the possibility to mail a letter or send a telegram anywhere. They could stay there for an eternity nobody knowing about their existence. They sent that message with a Greek sailor bribed with a good wristwatch. He kept the message <sup>for</sup> one day in his pocket until he found the only known Jew in town to hand it to him.

Now, the community was Elias Cohen and I. He had the message since a ~~a~~ couple of hours and he did not remain idle. He had already obtained the written permission from the harbor officer, whom he knew personally, to visit the ship which was not visible from the shore. Accompanied by a navy sailor, we rented a row boat. It was dusk and soon darkness ~~came~~ <sup>fell</sup>. Of course, we had heard about ships full of Jews roaming the world and not allowed to disembark any place. But it was remote, something you read in the paper and could not believe. Such inhumanity of man to man, you wondered. We rowed for about half an hour when suddenly the huge black mass of the cargo appeared before us, in total blackout because of the war. We saw multitudes of people silently watching us, leaning on railings, out of openings, sitting in hanging life saving boats. I shouted in German: "Leitung, bitte Leitung. The Management, please the management."

Immediately, at an opening to load cargo at the level of our boat, appeared four men. It was amazing how they could squeeze themselves out to that opening through the mass of the people. They told us, they were the leaders and ~~told us~~ their names. They were not allowed to come down to our boat and we not to step up into the ship. They told us, the cargo was under Panamanian flag, but it belonged to a Greek shipping company. One month before left Constanza, Rumania. In Istanbul they were not allowed to land neither to have any assistance by the local Jewish community. They reached the Greek island of Chios, but not Jews there. Now, they were there under quarantine, lacking everything and no coal to move. The captain and the crew isolated themselves and told them "you Jews will find coal that we move further." ~~They said~~ <sup>On</sup> the ship were people from Danzig, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Germany and Austria. We were ~~flabbergasted~~ <sup>astounded</sup>, seeing all those people hanging like grapes from everywhere.



They were standing just at the opening edge bending towards our small boat trying to make a conversation with us. I asked them in German what are their most urgent needs? They answered, everything that a man needs to survive physically. Anything edible, any medicine, anything you can bring us is precious. Gentlemen, I replied, we are a two man Jewish community in this town. I cannot promise anything. We go back to the shore and we will try hard. In twenty four hours we will come back to tell you if anything at all can be done. You know, I joked, I like Jews. I will come to say hello to you, at least. Gute Nacht meine Herren.

It was shattering. Back on the shore, we went straight to the telegraph office and sent a long night letter-telegram to Simon Levi, the representative of the American Joint Distribution Committee in Athens telling the story and asking for action. Within hours a telegram - reply arrived to us. Give them everything you can lay your hand on, we back you, we work on it, we are coming there at the soonest.

What can you do for two thousand people who suddenly fall on your <sup>lap</sup> ~~people~~ for mere life? The worst, this morning was a Sunday when everything is closed and people go to the Church. My credit rating in that town was zero, but Cohen was a well known native with a textile retail shop. Nearly nobody knew about a ship anchored outside the harbor under quarantine. We needed the cooperation of the authorities in the harbor and of the police. Cohen managed that. Very few understood our hurry and haste or cared for. The police working with us, shopkeepers were convinced to open their shops. Butchers, groceries, vegetable shops. We literally emptied them buying everything on sight. In several places, because of the weekend, supplies were low. Two bakeries opened for us and worked hard to have 1200 loafs of bread of one kilo each. As soon as a number of them was baked, was put in jute bags and transferred to the shore under police protection. Other supplies, vegetables, cheese, all kinds of fats, sugar, flour and what have you, was in all kinds of containers and added to the pile at the shore. We could not have enough meat but we had a number of chicken, some of them alive because nobody had the time to cut their throats. We worked frantically against the clock under the curious and suspicious eyes of the populace most of which for the first time in their lives laid eyes on real Jews.

It was again dusk approaching. We took out of the market all what possible. If we would have more time, we might have more. Some men we hired loaded hastily the supplies at the shore on ten barges, all we could rent. The bread, some still hot, the crates and the large tins with goat cheese and olives, the <sup>crates</sup> ~~crates~~ with the vegetables, the cartons with the canned condensed milk, fruit in baskets, bags with flour and sugar, a barrel or two with olive oil and so on and so forth. A car

*slowly*

nival atmosphere. It was already the twilight when we started sailing the overfilled barges the one after the other on a row. I was on the first and Cohen on the last.

Once again the giant cargo ship appeared suddenly from the darkness with the people again leaning and hanging everywhere. This time the commotion and noise were big, the humanity on the ship shouting, gesticulating, praying, laughing, crying, chatting with each other. The same four gentlemen were already at the same place as the day before. The barges one after the other were there and were all visible. I asked them if they could take care as I and Mr. Cohen stepped into the ship. We had obtained permission to do that "only for half an hour". They were very efficiently organized with their "police" and a chief of it who was for long time a police lieutenant in Vienna, Austria. They took over instantaneously. First I handed them two large straw baskets with a few hundred eggs, all we could round up. Promptly they were handed to two men to deliver them to the "hospital". We had to bring a few of those "policemen" in the boats down to help with the unloading. Brief orders were given in Yiddish. In less than one hour the barges were emptied. We had a short discussion with the men of the "Leitung". I said, I will come again next morning to see them by daylight. I have to know who are you, I joked. They handed us a kind of two paged memo with the story of their journey. Gute Nacht. We were already far and the ship no more in sight and we still heard the noise of the loud voices trying to tell us something.

We learned that most of the people on the cargo were of higher intellect for whom the American Joint Distribution Committee paid a lot of money in individual ransoms to the Germans and after long negotiations through one Storrrfer who was before the representative of the AJDC in Vienna, They gathered and shipped them in Constanza on that Cargo. Their official destination was "some place" in South America, but it was evident, the purpose was to land in Palestine which was then prohibited by the British. It was already one of those "ghost" ships with the uncertain destination. Some of them, after months and months of aimless wanderings, could finally disembark the human cargo in Shanghai, China and such places.

Next morning I was on the ship and was flabbergasted seeing all those men and women fighting for some space to move. I thought that if even the half of them were put out, again the ship would be overcrowded. It was something all these doctors and professors, the old ladies still dressed in finery and lace, respectfully stepping aside to make a way for me to pass. Several wanted to talk to me and even one tried to kiss my hand. I felt so greatly embarrassed. I was brought to the "office" a small private cabin. It was a well administratively run town. The space was divided in four parts or regions with roughly an equal number of people and the



four ~~management~~ gentlemen were representing each of these groups. I was given a tour on the ship. Each group prepared their own food and managed their own affairs. There was an orthodox and strictly kosher group, a conservative and a reform one and so on. I was in the "hospital", a kind of somewhat large "officers hall" in which beds stood next to each other with very sick people, some of them with <sup>(dysentery)</sup> skorbut. Also here well organized with nurses and doctors. A couple of them handed me a list of medical supplies they needed urgently with emphasis on serums and drugs for stomach disorders, diabetes etc. I said, I don't know, I will see. I was amazed that on that ship there were no children, at least little ones. I avoided asking about it.

In the morning a telegram arrived from Athens. Contact was established with the AJDC in Portugal where then was the central branch for Europe. They knew well about that cargo and the people though they did not know where it was and what happened. All expenses we made were endorsed and they were working in the matter of the coal. At that time it was more than a matter of funds. Next day Simon Levi and Jacob Nahmias somehow managed to come to Iraklion from Athens, travelling only by night on a rented motor boat which was rowed when far from the coast to avoid noise, ~~for the fear of the Germans~~. Simon Levi had a warehouse selling iron and steel materials for construction and Jacob Nahmias managed with his two brothers one of the biggest wholesale outlets for textiles, a family business. They had good credits with the local banks. We brought more supplies to the ship, among them medical and more serums for dysentery.

I went nearly daily to the ship. Cohen and the representatives of AJDC who came from Athens concentrated to the main problem, to put coal where it was so much needed. They were constantly in contact with Lisbon, Portugal and with Athens. In this harbor there was no coal. Finally, a small quantity of it could be located to move the ship to an other town of the island of Crete called Rethymnon where apparently was more coal to have. Twelve days after I first learned about its existence in that harbor, the ship left suddenly. Everything was done so secretly that I did not know when they will leave. All of us only anticipated and guessed. I have never seen again these people and I heard only that they reached the land of Israel.

Quite an experience for me with many unforgettable details. One remains still vividly in my memory. A woman died on the <sup>ship</sup> ~~sea~~. They wanted to bury her on land, as prescribed. We asked the chief harbor official for permission to bring the body in town accompanied by a Rabbi. They granted it and for the Rabbi to be on land for two or three hours. Nobody else was to be from the ship. The problem was where to bury her. There was a very old and totally neglected Jewish cemetery in the outskirts of this town and we obtained a permission to burial there. In

a forenoon we took over the body accompanied by a Rabbi from Danzig, Poland, a scholarly amiable thin man in his late thirties. We had no Minyan and could not have one. We were in all five Jews including the Rabbi. Then we went to the little city hall for registration of the death and the certificate the Rabbi wanted. On our return the Rabbi asked me for a very ~~important~~ personal favor. If possible to have a glass of beer. Mr. Cohen and the AJDC representatives had left us already. I convinced our constant guardian angel, the navy sailor and we sat at a small tavern. We had a good lunch and all the beer the Rabbi could drink which was two glasses. He said, he was never more happy, more content in his whole life I was too for him. He begged me, not to tell anyone on the ship about the meal and the beer. Of course, I answered. When we brought him back to the ship, he said who knows when I will again set foot on firm land.

By now the war between Greece and Italy was in full swing. I and the two gentlemen from Athens were stuck in that island with no possibility to go to the mainland. Finally we hired a kind of <sup>a</sup>large barge - motor boat used before for the transportation of produce and goods to the mainland. We bought strong canvas and large pieces of cork to make ourselves life saving equipment under the guidance of the captain. We took with us also three girls and a man who belonged to some theater group and were stranded there like us. In the dark of the night we sailed silently away trying to be always as near as possible to some shore of the many islands, making use of the motor only when absolutely necessary. At dawn we reached the island of Santorini, a huge volcanique rock with the small town built at the top. To reach it you have to step on a lot of very wide steps of stone, brightly lime white washed. There were trained donkeys to take tourists and goods on their backs and bring them up to the town. We passed the day there.

At the break of the night we took again to the sea relying on the navigational skills of the captain limited to the gazing of the movements of the stars. In the morning we reached Lavrion, about ~~sixty~~ miles from Athens. Soon we were there. I found, Martha had rented a small apartment looking out to a primitive backyard, near Acropolis. I and all the others were glad I was back there safe. I tried hard for a living. The few lessons I had and the few translations I made were not enough, just better than nothing. We hoped for the best.

The war against Italy in the north, in Albania, was going strong and was quite a spectacle. Greece with only a fifth of the population of Italy, was waging victorious battles. Germany, not yet in war with Greece, watched amusingly how her Italian partner was beaten lamentably by the so poorly equipped Greece. England at that time fighting alone against Germany, had sent some troops to Greece



which were of no help because they were not in the front. The supplies and especially in edibles, were more precious though not abundant. The best item was the cans of Argentina bourned beef.

In January 1941, my younger brother Moshe was mobilized again as a sargean with a light mountain artillery unit and sent immediately to the front. Next month I was in uniform as an infantry sergeant and after a couple of days in Komotini, a Macedonian town, I found myself attached ~~to~~<sup>to</sup> a division headquarters just a few miles behind the front lines. It was a miserably muddy Moslem village with twelve widely scattered houses and a mosque in the middle. I occupied the latter with a dozen of soldiers. The original population were given about half of the houses and we seldom saw ~~someone~~ of them venturing outside. We simply ignored them and ~~we~~ had no quarrel with them. Their women were totally invisible. The best building housed the general and the various offices. In a couple of other houses resided the officers and various services as communications and the like were under tents. The name of the place was Grabovista and there was constant movement

I have never seen so much mud in my life under those flooding spring rain. And there were real problems, the murderous cold of the Albanian mountains and the acute poverty of provisions. Once for ten days we had only dried white beans, spaghetti, pork fat and bread. For lunch we had a bean soup and for dinner spaghetti. To have a change next day we had for ~~dinner~~<sup>lunch</sup> spaghetti and for ~~lunch~~<sup>dinner</sup> dried beans. The other day we had mixed beans and spaghetti for lunch and dinner. We ~~some times~~<sup>some times</sup> had some olives or halva which was a plausible excuse to through out our beans or spaghetti ration. At the front line they lived a little better because often they captured rich and fancy supplies from the Italians. In spite of these privations, the moral of the Greek soldiers was as high as ever.

The beginning of April came and the weather became milder. Things were happening. On April ~~6th~~<sup>6th</sup> Germany declared war against Yougoslavia and Greece. Promptly and in blitz, they flooded Yougoslavia with armies and material. Where we were, we did not know much. Three days ~~later~~<sup>later</sup>, as I was near the highway distributing rationed gasoline to military vehicles late afternoon, I was to close shop and go back to the village, half a mile away, and call it a day. The gasoline and grease oil were in barrels camouflaged in a kind of small canyon. Just then a small military covered truck appeared from nowhere five people, a colonel, a captain and three military police, all in neat glittering Yugoslav uniforms. The colonel tried to tell me something in Yugoslav which I did not understand. I spoke to him in German which he seemed to know and ~~he~~ did not want to use. He did not know Italian, but with French the communication was established. He was very ~~aff~~<sup>with</sup> haughty. "Je veux voir votre general", I want to see your general, he said. I as-

ked a soldier who happened to be nearby to bring the man to our general. I started a conversation with the captain trying to have some news. He said, Germany invaded Yougoslavia without success and the Yugoslavs pushed the Germans back in all points. Meantime, the M.Ps. took a simple gray painted sturdy case and two heavy half filled bags of white thick canvas and put them at the road side. The captain spoke fluently German while the policemen remained silent. Some time passed and the colonel came back accompanied by the same Greek soldier. The truck which brought the Yugoslavs <sup>had</sup> left. The Greek soldier told me, our General wanted me to find transportation for the Yugoslavs and their baggage. I asked the colonel why ~~had~~ did he sent away his own vehicle, ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> said, it is very difficult to put an other at his disposal. But it was an order, ~~by the General~~.

The Yugoslav captain had told me that their crate and bags contained the property of the National Bank of Yougoslavia, apparently a branch of it of a nearby town. I caught a passing limousine going to the town of Kortsas, but it was full with personal luggage of officers in the front, <sup>and back,</sup> I could stop a while later an other passenger car with two Greek officers inside who spoke only Greek. It was impossible to accomodate in it all the five Yugoslavs and their three pieces of baggage which were bulky. The colonel was very upset and the Greek officers were annoyed losing time there. After a heated discussion, we could put in and behind the car the colonel, one of the M.Ps. and all the three pieces while the captain and the two M.Ps. remained back to be on an other vehicle. All of them would meet in Kortsas some twenty ~~five~~ miles from that place. The colonel started ordering me and I told him, he was not my officer and he was lucky to have someone who could speak an other language than Greek. For nearly an hour more I tried in vain to have an opportunity of sending the three remaining Yugoslavs away. It was late and the night came. I was hungry. There was a corporal guard there. I asked him to see about putting these three people in a car and I went. In the morning no Yugoslav was there. I never learned how they went away.

Our headquarters unit had about hundred fifty people in all kinds of jobs and the main one was in communications. In the last days a great deal of nervousness and precipitation was in the air. The morning after the incident with the Yugoslavs I was informed that something happens in the highway. I took some soldiers and rushed there. Two trucks were standing ~~there~~ with some sixty to eighty people, men women and children, mostly well dressed, a few even wearing black suits and evening gowns. They were highly bewildered and talked all together gesticulating in Yougoslav. I found someone who calmed down sufficiently to tell me in French that they wanted to know how to proceed to Greece and out of there. I told him, it is easy as long as they had the trucks and as far as I was concerned I had no objection that they go ahead, the sooner the better. But just then happened this.



Our village from time to time was under artillery fire though never up to now any damage or casualties were suffered. Either the houses were too far dispersed or the perennial mud was so soft and deep burrying the bombs before explosion or the Italians were very incompetent in aiming at. We learned to guess in what days we would receive artillery fire and when it would begin and end for the day. But in the last couple of days that changed radically including the direction from which the fire came. An officer said, well, it seems to come from the lake of Ochrid, which was Yougoslavia. The fire was now accurate, carefully avoiding to hit the village, the artillery missiles falling all around the village with no harm and as trying to save houses and the highway.

Just at the moment the trucks with the Yougoslavs were to start going, such a bomb hit the thick mud one hundred feet or so with the usual splash of mud all around. In great panic all those people jumped out of the trucks shrieking and dispersed out of the highway and into the mud. It took us nearly an hour to put all the hapless people back to the trucks and make them start. What they most needed first would be a good laundry facility. A strange humanity.

As I returned to the village content with the idea, the Yougoslavs were already out of there, I found an other commotion. There were about three hundred Italian prisoners of war, just brought in from the front. It was not the first time and always they were briefly interrogated/or in some cases not at all and ~~were~~ sent to nearby Kortsa for interrogation. The only two people in the headquarters handling Italian was I and a Jewish man I knew in Athens. He originated from Egypt. He was always with the interrogating officers and I with the prisoners outside trying to pacify them. Italians are mild, easygoing, peaceful people with whom you can fast be friends. I reassured the most panicked among them, joked a little and saw that they received something to eat. Of course, they liked spaghetti though not the way we cooked ~~them~~ <sup>it</sup>. One of them sported a raven black beard and I called him "barba nera", black beard and the name stuck. Most of the prisoners were tired, wounded and terrified. As we were selecting a few to send to be interrogated, a man asked me if they will be shot. I had pains to convince him, it was not so.

In the evening we filled all the available trucks, ~~with them~~, to send them to Kortsa and beyond, but there remained about one hundred prisoners we did not know what to do about. It was decided that they will be transferred by foot and they said, I was the man to see about it. I was the jack of all trades there. I took a dozen of soldiers with me, armed only with rifles, I put the Italians in a column and made a speech. Don't deviate out of the highway. <sup>2</sup> Dont try anything. I will shoot anyone who does.

The men were very tired. Some dragged literally their feet. After about one and a half hour, I ordered a ten minutes stop which was a big mistake. People did not want to get <sup>(back)</sup> on their feet, some even were sleeping and had to be awakened by force. Only the threat of violence put the column <sup>again</sup> ~~back~~ into marching. I had told my soldiers before. Nobody shoots anyone for any reason whatsoever. We were in move with this frightened and exhausted lot of humanity in that dark highway of the unknown land of Albania. But soon we had a problem. A prisoner fell on the ground moaning with spasms in his stomach, unable to move. As I approached he looked at me in terror supplicating; don't shoot me, please, don't shoot. It was awkward. He had in his right hand a picture with three little smiling children and in his left hand a little medaillon of Virgin Mary and was praying incessantly, Santa Maria, Santa Maria. It was something. I bent down and hugged him around the shoulders. I asked him what was his trade in Italy. He said, "sono un sartore", I am a taylor. Oh, I replied, I was a taylor too. There are many taylor in Greece, you know, and taylor don't shoot at taylor.

I stood up and made a brief speech to the column in Italian. I said, we need two men with heart, "due uomini con cuore" or "due uomini di cuore" to volunteer helping this man. Several came forward, two lifted the man up and the column set again in move. Fifteen minutes later we had an other man moaning and unable to march. His bandaged arm was bleeding through the bandages. It must have been by error that he was left out of the trucks in which several wounded men were sent away that evening. I realized that stopping at every little while, would never bring us to Kortsas. Various vehicles were passing ~~us~~ from time to time. No lights and we knew about them from the noise they made. Most ~~of them~~ did not stop to our signals. I put two soldierds on the road with rifles in the /ready.

An all covered light truck stopped. The driver told me, his vehicle had sensitive artillery material and it would not be good to put there prisoners. Besides he would bypass Kortsas on his way to Macedonia where his light mountain artillery unit was transferring in a hurry. Also there was no space for any man to put there. I asked him if he knows a sargeant named Sevilla. Yes, he knew him well. Oh, he added, he must be in one of the trucks coming behind, look out, if you want to see him. I hope, he was not before me, I don't know. Try. He is alright.

We caught a limousine with the driver and an army major in the back seat who was very impatient. No, he said, I don't take any prisoners. You can kill them, I don't take any in my car, I am in a hurry, get out of here, he ordered, he was very angry. The limousine was surrounded by my soldiers. I took my revolver out of the holster and told him. Kortsas is less than half an hour far from



here by car and over ~~two~~ hours by foot. If you prefer marching with us, be our guest or you will take the prisoners to Kortsas. I will give you one of my soldiers for your protection. I give you one minute to decide. Though I did not point my gun at him, he knew I ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> serious. I was very upset and, anyway, I had to bring my prisoners, all of them, to Kortsas and also I knew that our front was collapsing. I put in the limousine five prisoners and one of my soldiers was hanging on the outside foot board of the car. Have a good trip, I said to the major. He said, you will pay for this. I replied, I don't care. The man with the stomach spasms, still in much pain, was crying. He repeated, "Vi ringrazio tanto, tanto".

A couple of light artillery trucks I could stop, all knew about my brother but they did not know where his truck was. I did not find him that night. I missed him somehow. At day break, we saw Kortsas emerging in the horizon. One of the main Albanian towns of about fourty thousand people, nearest to Greece, now the center of the Greek administration of the war. As we entered the town and <sup>under</sup> ~~in~~ the glorious spring sun, marching the few town streets with people on the pavements watching curiously at the column of the wretched prisoners, I had a feeling of accomplishment, of satisfaction. I found the right place and delivered my prisoners. I was glad that all my soldiers behaved very humanely. There were greetings. Small piece of paper were pressed into my hand with names and addresses. To a few I had to give my name and address. All in the heat of the moment. I lost all those pieces of paper and I was never contacted by anyone.

In the afternoon of the same day we caught a truck to return to our base, Grabovista, though everyone sensed the futility of returning to the front. And at that sa-me evening, in the general's offices, I heard in the radio a voice in German "die Hakenkreuzfahne weht auf Saloniki", the Swastika flags flutters over Salonica. I thought, my Gosh, they are already there and what are we doing here? I knew that I had not to utter one word about that. It would be dangerous to my health. We knew that there was a hard fight further north of Salonica against the invading Germans, at the fortified Metaxas line. What really happened was that they pierced it and went straight for Salonica leaving all the other territory to occupy later. A real "Blitz" war. The two days more we were there, in that village, were for me a real puzzle full of anxiety. Suddenly, late afternoon, loaded trucks with main equipment, material and files disappeared one after the other. Then most officers went out of sight. I was glad, I had a horse which I rode rather rarely, but it was my horse. It ~~was~~ proved to be a blessing in disguise.

Near midnight we went on the road, people, mules, horses, kitchen equipment all mixed up. It was a chilly night. After a few hours I discovered, it was impossible to get down. My knees were hopelessly cramped and were hurting a lot. Two soldiers took me down, expertly rubbed my knees and helped me to walk up and down to restore circulation. I guess, I could never make a living as a cowboy.

In the morning airplanes were above us. We scattered searching for cover. Instead of bombs they were throwing leaflets in Greek. Greek soldiers, we have nothing against you. Go to your homes. We are against the British. You are brave, and so on. At noon we reached a large village named Viglista, just at the border with Greece. There we found enough food, <sup>left by the British</sup> mostly corned beef, biscuits and candy. Also hay for the horses and mules. We crossed the border at midnight and as the new day came, we were in total disarray, no officers at all around, everyone for himself, soldiers forming small groups and going their way for themselves, the groups forming and deforming, adding and subtracting, everyone trying to find the nearest way to his home town. I was ~~with~~<sup>with</sup> a few people of my unit, one of whom had the kitchen equipment on a cart driven by a mule. Finally he agreed to give it and the mule to a peasant who happened to be there ~~who~~<sup>who</sup> said, thank you.

We passed the night in an orchard under a drizzly rain. I had my horse and my blankets. Next day was like the doomsday. Nobody knew where we were and where we were going. As we passed Greek villages, we had some information and orientation. The man who gave away our kitchen said, he had a sister married to someone who had a farm somewhere there. We could locate it in the afternoon, and we remained outside the village hidden in a barn while our man went to explore if his sister is still there and if Germans were in the village. He came back with the Green light and we passed the night there. Early in the morning German soldiers came, gun in the hands, searching of all matters, for alcohol. It was wild and I thought, they would shoot us down. We headed for the mountains. Wild places I never had seen before.

But our biggest problem were the rivers, how to cross them. The Germans were everywhere by now and watched with curiosity and also indifference at the multitudes of the hungry and dust covered Greek soldiers on the highways. The bridges were all destroyed and they were feverishly working to put temporary pontoons on which only one of the heavy trucks could pass slowly at a time. They did not want us on the pontoons. We could not sit at the one side of a river forever looking ~~at~~<sup>at</sup> the other, ~~side~~. The only way to cross a river was marching through it. The horse was helpful, but my horse became a liability as I had nothing to give it to eat. I gave it <sup>with a amount</sup> to a Greek peasant who insisted to give me some money, more as <sup>a</sup> patriotic gesture. I received five Drachmas which at best it was a fraction of one Dollar. Some rivers were very streamy and dangerous. If you would lose your foothold, you were lost. I have seen some drowning there. It happened once to me. Near the opposite shore I lost the ground from under my feet. I was lucky that I could grab the tail of a mule and reached floating and safe the firm land. I turned to the mule and thanked it for saving my life.



In the highways a lot of British wrecked material, trucks, tanks and half buried men at the road side. Long files of heavy German trucks for miles, waiting to pass on makeshift bridges and pontoons, one at a time. Drivers in small groups gathered around one truck ~~and~~ chatting and joking. Some drivers leaning on the huge steering wheel reading something or watching the Greek dusty soldiers in utter boredom. I avoided speaking in German because they needed desperately interpreters. I had heard about a Jewish man from Salonica who knew German. They kept him with the promise, they would bring him themselves to Salonica. Only they forgot to tell him when. I spoke only to drivers to ask for something. In my group were now about ten men totally unknown before to me with exception of the kitchen man who stuck with me from the beginning. The others were there because they hoped I would provide food and cigarettes.

I would listen to a driver talking and if I could make out where he was from, I approached and asked him in "hochdeutsch" in literate German, if he originated from Munich. Astounded he would ask, how you know it? Oh, I hear you, I replied, I am a Ph.D. in Commercial sciences a graduate of the University in Munich. I lived near Marienplatz, my wife is a native of Munich and my two children were born there. I am now a professor. They were impressed and we chatted a little. Then I asked them if they have any canned foods, bread, cigarettes, we were about ten men. Everyone run to his truck to bring something and soon we had for a couple of days enough. We would disappear promptly to go to some nearby river or forest and have a feast.

For about two weeks I was marauding with my group from village to village, sleeping on the bare floor of deserted schools as the thousands of other Greek soldiers, trying all kinds of tricks to have some food because we had no money. It was in a zig-zag manner to a lot of places. One morning we were in a <sup>Town</sup> ~~place~~ in Thessaly called Saritsani. There was an empty half truck of which the sole driver was drinking something at the little caffee. I asked him where he was going. He said to Larissa, a couple of hour driving from there. He was from Vienna and he was happy when I spoke to him in Viennese dialect and told him, <sup>had</sup> I studied ~~business administration~~ in Vienna and I married a Viennese girl and my first son was born in that town. He took all of us in the track and covered it so that we were not visible from outside. He told me, he did not know where he will go after that, but if I can meet him at the "Komandatur", he will tell me. He left us at the town square where a lot of other perplexed Greek soldiers were as there was no food and no shelter in that then overcrowded and demoralized town.

I told to my friends to wait for me and I went to find out where the "Komandatur" was when a little two seat car stopped before me and one of the two men

asked me if I know where the "Komandatur" was. I said, I am just searching for it and let me ask. As it was a very new thing, nobody knew where it was. Finally we found it, but the guard did not let me enter the small building. I could not find the Viennese man and I was ready to go when the two young Germans of the car came down and asked me if I found my friend. I said no and wanted to know, to where they were going. They said, to Athens. For me, already since twenty two days meandering from place to place with the sole goal to reach Athens, their destination was like a dream. I asked them if they can take me with them, but how? I said, you will need an interpreter and Athens is a long way far. They said, if you can sit with one foot outside the car, we will take you. I said, even with both feet outside the car, I will come. <sup>I was anyway to Athens.</sup> Otherwise I would have to go all the way to Athens by foot, a distance of about two hundred fifty miles. There was no railway functioning and no busses running. We went at the square, I took my things and said farewell to my friends. I could not help them anymore.

Late evening we reached Lamia. The town was in great confusion and full of refugees. At a bakery a very long line waited for bread. We went at the head of it and made the baker to give us bread piping hot. ~~Then~~ <sup>We</sup> bought some groceries and sat at a coffeehouse to eat. Then we entered by force an inhabited house and asked for a room to sleep. All that at the request of the Germans. I tried to reassure everyone that no harm is meant. The problem is that these two young men belonged to the SS and I knew at that time how aggressive they were. Early in the morning, we started again driving. The highways were jammed, bridges and roads damaged. Especially the mountain roads over Lamia were full of obstacles. In the afternoon, as we approached Thebes, it was impossible to breath from the stench of dead horses. The air was so strongly polluted with the odor that we had to put our handkerchiefs before our noses for a long time to be able to breath.

By midnight, they said we were in Athens. I was so exhausted physically and mentally that I could not recognize places otherwise so familiar to me. But it was obvious we were in that big town. The wide street was closed and a German officer came to our car for identification. When he saw the SS men and me, he reprimanded them that they had taken an enemy soldier in their car when they were travelling ~~on~~ a special mission. They said, his wife is a German. We will see that, he remarked. Get out you, he ordered me. I did it with haste after collecting my few things from the rear of the car. My two Germans drove away.

Now, ~~I~~ <sup>back</sup> was there. It was the time that the officer was replaced by an other one who did not know anything about me. May be I was lucky. I heard that in Eleusi a few miles away, there was a camp for Greek soldiers if there was to verify anything about them or if they originated from Peloponese, where the fight with the British still was going on. I thought, I had to disappear from there, but where



to go. In spite of the curfew, I found a Greek and asked him where the police precinct~~was~~. He could not come and show me, but he gave me the direction. I lost time to find it in the darkened streets. I asked them to let me sleep at some corner. They gave me a cup of coffee and something to eat. In a couple of hours, at dawn, they awakened me and told me, better go now. The Germans don't like people wearing the Greek soldiers uniform. I took my knapsack and bundle and I went, following their instructions what streets to follow. But I was lost <sup>again</sup> and came on the highway. Acropolis was visible and therefore my house was near. A man with an empty vegetable cart told me to put my things on it. Then people gathered around me as I was going and put money in my hand. I told them, I don't want any money, I want only to go home. Then they have shown me a narrow street to take which I did and I got lost. <sup>I was going for nearly an hour.</sup> I kept asking passersby and I could not reach my street. Then I asked again a man where is the Lycomidon Street where my home was. He looked at me intensely and exclaimed; Elias what happened to you, I am Michael, don't you recognize me. Yes, I recognized him now. He was a friend living at the next street of mine and on top of that he was Jewish. I started crying, please Michael, take me home, please, please, I begged, take me home. Come, he said gently taking my arm, don't worry, it is alright. My home was just two minutes from there. As we reached the iron wrought gate of my backyard, Michael shouted: Kyra (Mrs.) Martha come down, fast. She came running. Thank you Michali she said to Michael. She took my hand silently to bring me upstairs. I pushed her away. Don't touch me, I told her, I am full of lice. She warmed water on the fire in the kitchen, she scrubbed all my body and gave me fresh underwear. As I entered the house (the kitchen was outside it) I saw Danny looking at me, ~~with~~ wide open eyes with curiosity. He did not recognize me. He was already walking leaning his little hand on a furniture piece. Leon, the first born, was since a couple of days with his aunts.

This was the end of my war. It was the sixth of May 1941. I was away since only three months, but you could easily put into them a small life time or a few years. I went to sleep for nearly twenty four hours. Life is beautiful.

Cont. on

Page 223

cf. 1977.

THE AVALANCHE AND THE AFTERMATH

Cont. P. 169

1974

In the morning I put my blue suit. It floated on me. I was very thin and tanned. No wonder, twenty five days going through mountains and valleys and rivers. Some place on the way I let someone to cut all my hair because of the lice. Now I put on a hat. I was still dizzy and I did not know what to do. I went out to the nearby Thission square. I lifted my eyes and saw the Acropolis hill and the many people swarming the area. Absentmindedly I went slowly to that direction trying to decide what to do to earn something. There certainly was no export or import activity anymore. May be I could have some students or perhaps translations. As I neared the Acropolis gate, I stood there watching the people coming and going like ants, in perpetual movement. All of them were Germans in all kinds of uniforms, army, marine, air force, technical, all ranks. A sunny day in May. I knew the place so well since early childhood. I never had seen as many and so strange people there. I thought, here are the Greece loving Germans.

I saw near me a "Feldwebel", a sergeant searching for something and I had an idea. I asked him if he wants to have "eine kurze Führung", a short guidance on the hill. He seemed alleviated. He asked, are you a "Führer", a guide? I was the only Greek civilian around. Certainly I am, I replied. But I am not alone, he said, I have a few more with me, can you take us all? Of course, I answered, sure, this is my business. He asked me how I know so well German? Oh, I said, you know, I graduated from the University of Heidelberg and my wife was a German teacher, a good girl, we have three kids by now.

Some place nearby we came on about twenty German soldiers. I did not anticipate as many. Anyway, we went up the steps to the hill. I knew much about Acropolis though not as much to do a responsible guidance, but I thought, they knew less than I and they would take my word on what I would tell them. It was like the one-eyed being the king of the blind. I mobilized all my knowledge I remembered, dates, names. We visited the Acropolis Museum where it was easier for me as there were inscriptions. The soldiers were neatly dressed and very disciplined and respectful to me. No problems. They took for granted anything I said.



In an hour or so, we all came down the broken marble steps to the exit. The sergeant asked me how much I have to get paid. I told ~~me~~ him frankly, I just came back from Albania marching for nearly one month, and they should give me what they like. I took off my hat to show my shorn hair. I added, I was a sergeant too. He took my hat, passed it to his men, each one put something in, gave it back to me saying, aufwiedersehen, danke <sup>schoen</sup> ~~schoen~~, thank you. I said, Danke, Danke. Into the hat was a small fortune.

That's it, I thought. I bought a booklet about Acropolis from a vendor selling cards and souvenirs all hung on his clothing and in a small carton he was holding. I memorized fast what I needed from the few pages and approached a group of four or five offering guidance. I made it short, about half an hour and then approached others. Money was coming to me and adding up. In the afternoon, as the movement subsided, I went down town and bought the most needed article in our home, a small ice box and saw to it that it was brought home promptly. I bought some groceries and other things.

Evening I went to my parental home which was not far from ours. My brother Moshe was already back. He knew about searching for him that night in Albania. He had already passed me when I started looking for him. He came unscathed from the harrowing adventure against the Germans in Macedonia. Our family was alright. My brother Errico with his wife Rachel and their four year old daughter Lisa were well. Victor and Victoria and their one year old daughter were also well. My sister Rina was now engaged to be married and Rosa was always there, the second mother, minding the family. There was Esther and the Leah, the youngest sisters, twenty three and twenty. Pinhas, now forty two, still a bachelor, doing always the umbrella repair, very introvert and shy, chronically suffering from something, a very sensitive stomach, hemorrhoids and I don't know what more.

Next morning I was again in Acropolis and in business. It seemed as if all the Germans on Greek soil wanted to see Acropolis without any delay, at the same day. Germans always had and still have a feeling for ancient Greece and everything

ancient Greek. I found this out when I was in Austria and Germany. Too many people knowing ancient Greek and appreciating it. Now, every man putting his foot in this town, his first way was on that hill up, shining and visible from everywhere. At that initial occupation time, too many military came in and went out of this town. What was remarkable, while Greece was occupied together with Italy, you did not see one single Italian going up to Acropolis. Athens was a zone assigned to the German military, but there were a few Italians in town all the same. This was a first hint about the resentment Germans felt against Italians.

For a couple of weeks I was there and making money. The great wave of visitors to the antiquities had subsided a little though still many people came. A morning, a Greek policeman asked me if I have a guide licence for Acropolis. I had not. He was very sorry. I told him, I just came from Albania, I have no job, a family and the like. He gave me four more days and then, I had to get out of there or get a guide licence from the Ministry of Interior. This would mean to get examined and wait for several months on red tape. There were on Acropolis half a dozen licenced guides. I talked with them. There was enough business to feed all of us. We had discussions. They were afraid that everyone around knowing German would come and play with tourists on their expense. I asked for a reprieve, I won a few days more.

The first desire of the Germans was to see the antiquities. The second was to buy goods and merchandise scarce in Germany. One of them was fabrics for garments, more of wool and silk. Greece had always a fine textile and fabrics industry. Now, all around outside the Acropolis gate, it was full of precarious wooden stands with mostly textiles and fabrics. Some vendors even were movable, hanging fabric pieces from shoulders and arms. The main problem for sellers and buyers was lack of communication. Just there I fit in. I proposed to vendors to translate each time against a commission, average ~~5%~~ five percent, in case of sale. Continually I was called loudly from stand to stand, the procedure took a couple of minutes and I received my commission on the spot. There were days, it was more



profitable than on the hill. I thought again, if I can do it for six months or a year, may be have enough capital to do something more stable.

But this thing too proved to be shortlived. In a couple of weeks in the morning, as the beehive of vendors, buyers, visitors to the hill streamed in and out, a lot of German police and Gestapo, the latter in civilian clothing appeared and stopped abruptly everything. They run up and down real wild, giving orders, questionning and arresting on first sight. They ordered everyone out of there, All those multitudes of Greek vendors hastened to obey, dismantling stands, taking away tables and wares, all running for their lives.

We soon learned what happened that made the Germans that furious. At the backside of Acropolis there was the German flag on a high pole. Two very daring Greek youths during the night had climbed the <sup>steep</sup> rock painfully, ~~waded~~ lowered the flag, took it with them, came down the rock and disappeared into the night and the dark. Quite a feat because of the strong guard on Acropolis and the many patrolling by the Germans, in mid-Athens. During their three and half years of occupation, they never found out who did it. We knew the names first after the war. The Germans never forgave Athens for that.

Rina married that summer. She was twenty seven, a beautiful girl. David, her husband, a fine man in his early thirties, was one of the managers of his uncles big textile and fabrics shop in Athens and made good money. His uncle had no children of his own and the business would be inherited by his nephews. A good marriage in every aspect. This uncle was one of them who started very humbly as street peddlars for years and ended with very big businesses of their own.

After our expulsion from the vicinity of Acropolis, I tried my hand in the town. The Germans always bought Greek merchandise and there were shops. In a good part of them, no German was spoken. I declined permanent positions because they did not pay well and the inflation was galloping. I fished buyers in the street. I used to approach Germans, more so officers, and ask them if they need to buy anything. Then I brought them to a shop and I received something from them

and a commission from the shopowner. It was sometimes not as profitable as before in Acropolis, but it was alright. Then I started going with two others to German encampments around Athens seling<sup>1</sup> textiles for a couple of weeks, but I found, it was rather dangerous because it was arising their suspicions. It was from there that paratroops and other forces were flown to attack and take the Island of Crete. I remembered my prophecy just one year before that Germans may come to take that island and I was laughed at.

I returned to fishing Germans in the streets for buying wares at the shops. By now this was no more so profitable because merchants managed to have someone on hand with even primitive knowledge of German. Once I approached a major and a lieutenant very neatly uniformed, proudly having the SS signs on their lapels and very arrogant. I should not approach them. They told me, what they needed was to go to Acropolis and be guided there. I explained that they could find a guide on the hill and I could not do it. I told them why. They laughed. They put me in their chauffeured car and we went on Acropolis. When a guide with a Greek policeman came near and wanted to talk to me, the major pushed them away. I felt embarassed.

When finished, they asked me to show them more antiquities. I brought them to the ancient Greek cemetery of Keramikos, then at the temple of the God of the winds Eolos and other places. Early in the evening they wanted to eat and brought them to a good restaurant. They liked me, but I would prefer to get away from them. In the evening they told me that they will be in town for about ten days and how much I wanted to be paid per day to be with them and guide them around. Earlier in the ~~afternoon~~<sup>evening</sup>, as they wished to go to a restaurant, I asked them to drive at my home to tell my wife, I will be a little late that evening. I repented it that they knew now where I live.

I was for ten days with them. We visited more antiquities around Athens and often went to the beaches. I never swam with them. Nearly every evening we were late together. There was curfew in town after nine P.M. very strictly applied



They gave me a written permit. It was good as long as I would be able to show it before <sup>they shot at me</sup> ~~showing it~~, which could very well happen. At the last day they told me how much they appreciated my service to them and what a good man I was. They wanted to do me a big favor. They recommended me warmly to the Gestapo office to hire me as a confidential interpreter. I needed that like I needed a hole in my head.

I thanked them and forgot about it, but I was not left alone. A few days later someone brought in my home a nice invitation to the Gestapo. I went to face the devil head on. They were friendly, I was told how highly was I recommended, how much I was needed there, how high my earnings would be and how many my privileges to enjoy. I assured them, I am their man, very happy to work for them, but I need a couple of weeks or so, my German wife depressed, my older boy sick, myself not feeling very well. One month later or so, I received an other letter from them. No alternative, I went to their office. Now I talked with someone else who was not as hot as the other before. Somehow, I escaped him too.

Now I was with a small gang and we were buying from Germans anything they had to sell. Our main item was saccharine which was seemingly in abundance with the Germans and very scarce in the open market. Sugar was very scarce and very expensive. But we made all kinds of deals. Some went in vacation to Germany, France or other occupied countries and bringing with them goods we bought. One brought us a big quantity of hair nets from France. We sold them easily.

The situation in Greece that very cold winter of 1941-1942 was desperate. Money was inflating from one hundred to one thousand percent in a single day. Food became terribly scarce and inaccessible. High disorganization of everything, including the black market. Athens was under blockade and nothing came from the island and continental provinces. People were starving and falling dead during the night in the cold streets and under porches. As it became dark in the evening, you could hear plaintive voices of passersby crying "I am hungry, I am hungry". In the morning municipal garbage trucks gathering dead corpses from streets and houses. They were buried in common pits.

As that horrible winter passed and spring of 1942 arrived, the situation with food supply got better, not because the Germans cared but because the black market got better organized. A multitude of people rode on trains up to above them or in shaky leaking small barges, to go somewhere and bring a few kilos of foodstuffs to earn a share of them and stay alive. Because of the total lack of means of transportation very few could make black market in a bigger scale than that. My sister Rosa and my brother Erricos used to disappear a few days and come back with twenty or thirty pounds of dried beans, some wheat or corn, sometimes a little cheese or rarely some sausage.

It takes such conditions to know better the man. People who never were seen before in the open, now were mingling with everyday people and real life. They came out of their shell. The noble, the rich, the untouchable and the unapproachable appeared on street level offering for sale everything of value and glory they had, often in exchange for a loaf of bread. On the other hand, the multitude of the "nouveau riche" handled them full of revenge, arrogance, cruelty and vulgarity. Writers, actors, politicians of previous fame, people who were separated from their big assets abroad, were starving and begging for crumbs.

It was fascinating for a social observer. The simplest things became <sup>high</sup> luxuries, a couple of potatoes, two thin slices of bread, a couple of eggs, a piece of chocolate. If you visited someone and he put discreetly in your pocket a piece of bread, it was the greatest favor ever. Bread was rationed and bread was of broom straw seeds, yellow and indigestible. It was indescribable. Only lemons were in abundance and the good lemon saved the world, cured everything, made skeletal mothers to produce the few drops of milk to sustain their infants, kept alive starving people with swollen bodies. The conquerors could do everything that winter of 1941-42, but they could not take the lemon away.

My knowledge of German was again very helpfull. I used to stay outside a huge restaurant down town which catered only to Germans and I talked to everyone of them I could asking for one or two slices of bread in their pockets when coming out. It was like a fishing expedition. I had a small canvas bag and put



there whatever I received, very thin slices of real bread, sometimes two small cooked potaetos, a little sugar in a piece of paper and very rarely a small piece of chocolate. This waiting outside that big restaurant is unforgettable to me. The many freezing people begging each outcoming German soldier, begging "Brot, Brot, bitte", sometimes shoved harshly away. There were all kinds of beggars there, all ages and nearly everyone had something in his canvas bag at the end. Most of the soldiers brought something in their pockets. It gave them a feeling of superiority, of magnanimity, as inherent to the cruellest of people, to through something to a beggar or to a dog.

Often my harvest was very meager. Everything went home to our two sons and if there was a little more bread around, we put some into the pockets of our people. I was so much preoccupied with all this that myself I abstained of eating any particular "luxury", an egg, starchy things, sugar or seemingly very little for a couple of years. Just after the war some of my teeth simply broke in the middle. The Dentist could not understand it. He labelled it "avitaminose", whatever it means.

*with his husband David made*  
~~In the fall of 1941~~ my sister Sara or Rina, ~~married~~ a beautiful couple. In 1942 they had a little girl they named Rosa, the name of his mother. Our youngest sister Leah, now twenty one worked as a nurse in a hospital where she cared for a Jewish invalid, the only one there, named Mark Mevorah (it translates, the Blessed). He had both feet amputated, the one just above the ankle and the other just above the knee. He originated from Komotini in northern Greece and cut off totally from his family. A robust handsome man of twenty four, she pushed his cart in the streets and the parks. They married in the fall of 1942. They went to live in our parental house.

Vox populi, vox Dei. People were in movement and the mountains were filling with resistance of all persuasions and shades, from extreme left to extreme right. They fought against the Germans and sometimes, for a change, they fought each other. The British assisted them with money and parachuting military. A pup+

pet Greek Government was in Athens and a free Greek Government in Cairo, Egypt. All kinds of people collaborated with the Germans for all kinds of reasons and motives, like fish in troubled waters. Some did it for wages or for riches, others for revenge or for glory they could not attain normally, or mere speculation; "If Germany wins I may become the king of the wretched". For some of the same reasons as above and some out of pure patriotic duty, fled by night to the shores of Turkey and then to Egypt, to join the Greek Government in exile. The order of the world was reversed and so were human values.

In that summer of 1942 Martha was again pregnant. Everyone around, including all the Sevillias, were flabbergasted, and they told me so. I repeated the popular saying: "Every new child brings his chances with it". I hoped, those chances would be favorable to our new child. But for sure, it seemed to be the worse time to have a new birth. That same summer who appeared of all people in our home in the uniform of a German sailor but Johnny, my friend of Vienna? We all were happy to see each other. He became a frequent guest in our home. Good, he did not know we are Jewish. The least to say, it was certainly healthier.

Winter came and it was very grim. It was much better with food supply than the last, but the war was by far more intense in all fronts. Now Japan, Russia and America were very actively involved, Germany was in Libya pushing hard East. The partisans in Greece were something for the Germans to reckon with. Nearly all of Scandinavia was already occupied by Germany, Holland and Belgium too. All that was reflected in our daily life, on the relation of the occupiers to the Greek population, on the fighting spirit of the Greek resistance.

One of the daily problems was the scarcity of the rationed electricity. If for any reason you surpassed your very meager monthly quota, or they thought you did, they cut off your electricity. Martha's pregnancy was advancing well. A good friend of mine, an obstetrician, took the pre-natal care of her. It was on a Sunday, December thirteenth, when the day of truth arrived. Bringing Martha to a maternity hospital, was out of question. I called my sister Rosa and an elderly woman,



named Eleni who was very closely befriended to Martha and the Doctor came around noon. The problem was that the day before they had cut our electricity and as it was Sunday, we could not do anything about it. The only hope was that the birth would be before dusk, as long as it was daylight.

It was not a good place to have a birth, in those three very small rooms, the small kitchen outside on a terrace. All the warm water the doctor needed, Kyra (Mrs) Eleni tried to warm on a small alcohol cooker we had and then she made fire on the coal contraption we had for everyday use. The only electrical appliance we possessed was an RCA radio set. Early afternoon, Johnny the sailor came by chance and it was good because he took care of Leon who was now nearing ~~xxx~~ eight and, of course, spoke German fluently as well as Greek.

The afternoon advanced and at five o'clock it started to be dark. We needed electricity desperately. You could not have a birth in such a small room under candle light. I convinced a neighbour to allow us to make the temporary connection, but where to find an electrician to do it?? A couple of neighbours went out in the search for one. We had not even enough candles and could not find anymore. Suddenly I saw Kyra Eleni running from the kitchen to that room and in minutes I heard the wailing of the new life. It was a very easy birth, not even too much pain. All that under the light of two small candles. Kyra Eleni came out. It is a girl, she said, a beautiful girl. Just what we wanted. It was six thirty.

A few minutes after the birth, they brought a young electrician they fished out of a tavern and took him from his friends. In five minutes we had the magic light you can have on the mere turning on of a switch. I never appreciated it more in my life. The man declined any payment and went happily back to his friends.

I went to Victoria's home to have back Danny I had left this morning with. He was now two years and eight months old, a very cute little boy. My people came to see my new child. In spite of all, everything was well. We did not know about the name. There was already a Lisa Sevilla, the daughter of my brother Errico. The name of Martha's mother was Aloisia. So, we compromised. We made it Louise. Years later it was changed to Aliza, meaning in Hebrew, the "Joyful".

We were now in 1943 and the occupation of the country became more oppressive while the resistance in the towns and the country became stronger. Greece was divided in an Italian and a German zone or administration. Rarely two partners were so different, the Italians lenient, often humanitarian, compassionate to people and more to children while the Germans very conscious conducting an all out war with all its implications. I had quite a number of adventures, some of them hairsplitting, a matter of life or death, most of them in the pursuance of the main endeavour of earning a living. I could ~~11~~ write a ~~Separate~~ book on them. I will only refer to the most harrowing <sup>one</sup> ~~of them~~, the "Salt Incident" as it remained vivid on my mind up to this very day. I find myself sometimes still debating with myself the pro and the con of this, as it would have happened only yesterday.

We bought everything from German soldiers and this included an occasional bicycle which we used to dismantle and sell the parts of which there was big scarcity. One of those soldiers offered to sell to me salt. At that period, salt of all things was scarce in that country with the hundreds of islands and the immense Mediterranean shores. We made an appointment at a street corner near his barracks and not very far from my home, just after dark. It was in January, somewhat chilly, I came with a small handcart as it was used at that time for transportations. He arrived in time going and holding a sturdy military bicycle, on it firmly bound a bag with approximately sixty pounds of coarse cooking salt in a wet bag. I gave him the money, put the jute burlap bag in my cart and hurried away into the darkness to my home. In fifteen or twenty minutes I would be there.

Everything seemed alright and I speculated to which tavern to sell the salt next morning and how much to ask for. Suddenly, from nowhere, a German patrol appeared, a "Feldwebel" a sergeant and two soldiers, fully armed, grim, menacing, terrifying. They could not read my identification card, only compare the photograph with me. One of them opened my bag and I was glad, it was salt and nothing discriminating. The "Feldwebel" asked. Where is this from? I named an imaginary street. I bought it, I said. From whom? I named an imaginary person. Where do you bring it? To my home. What will you do with so much salt? It was clear that I was very suspicious to them.



The snap questions were now coming brusquely like thick drops of rain from the sky, louder and louder in that deserted street. The "Feldwebel" yelled at me while the two soldiers pointed at me their guns in the ready. I thought feverishly. They would arrest me, bring me to the "Kommandantur" or the "Gestapo". It could not be worse. They would find out where the salt comes from, that I am Jewish on top of it and my fate would be sealed. It is amazing how fast the brain works in such situations. The German used very short sentences. I was answering in the broken German Greeks had already learned to handle.

I knew, if anything, it should be in the next few seconds. I became increasingly nervous, even hysterical and thick sweat drops came down from my cheeks in spite of the cold of the night. I kept repeating to myself; keep cool, for God's sake keep cool, keep cool. It was good, they could not see well my face. Oh God, oh God, I thought, how to unhook from those people, how to get away from them. My warm bed and my family were only fifteen minutes by foot from there. If I would run, they would kill me on the spot, before I could make ten feet. If I only could get away from them. It was murder. I summoned all my strength to stop shaking.

Suddenly I had a desperate idea. I left the last question of the "Feldwebel" unanswered and looked at him for a few seconds coolly and intensely. Please, tell me, I asked in "Hochdeutsch", the correct German of the educated, does it happen that you originate from Bavaria, from the town of Munich? Though I could somehow differentiate between German as spoken in various areas in Germany and Austria, my assumption was a wild guess. I saw that for a moment my question put him out of balance, it surprised him. How do you know, he remarked, have you ever been there? If I have been there, I replied, it is more than that. I have my ph.D. in archeology and Anthropology from the University of Munich. I have even taught there for a while. You know, I continued, I studied in Vienna and I received my doctorate in Munich. I even married a girl in Munich and my eldest son was born there.

It was amazing how his attitude changed. Where did you live in Munich, I asked. He named a street I never had heard of. Oh, I know, I ventured, it is not

far from Marienplatz. I have been only shortly in Munich a couple of times and I remembered this very central square. Yes, he answered, not very far from there. I kept talking and he was listening. You know, I have three fine children. After the war we will go and live in Munich, such a wonderful town, good people. My wife is sad these days. No news from her two brothers who are fighting in Russia. Germany will win this war and everyone will be happy.

As long as I talked and they listened, I felt less nervous, more relaxed and natural. I was afraid to stop talking as I was afraid of the vacuum which might come. You know, I went on, I think after the war we will settle in Munich and I may teach there. I have in mind to write something and make research. I tried to use the most faultless language I only could. May be we will meet there some day. It was something like taming the shrew. The rifles of the two soldiers were no more aimed at me.

Then the "Feldwebel" asked: Why do you do this? A man of your education. Why don't you try interpreting? You should try this instead of buying and selling salt during the night. First thing in the morning you go to our "Kommandantur". I will tell them about you. If I would not be now in service, I would bring you there and they will hire you on the spot. Where do you live, he asked? Oh, about fifteen minutes from here. For a moment the sergeant became menacingly rigid. Look, he exclaimed, don't do that again, never, running into the night like that. It can be very costly, more than you can imagine. Then, in a socially relaxed tone he remarked. I studied two years at the University of Munich. I was taking history.

It was phantastic, unbelievable and by now I was entirely reassured. The man was now protective. He said, go now, we cannot accompany you but we will not be very far behind. Go straight home with your cart. Don't forget to morrow to come to the "Kommandantur". I will try to be there. Tell them my name and he told me his name. We were now on social terms. I gave him my hand and so did it to the two soldiers. Danke bestens meine Herren, thank you Gentlemen, Gute Nacht. Gute Nacht said the "Feldwebel" and he added "und meine Grösse <sup>Zu</sup> ~~zu~~ Ihre Frau Gemahlin" and my greetings to your wife. Really phantastic.



I reached home, my throat very dry and my mouth very bitter. I did not say anything about this to Martha. Why scare her? I was glad, the sergeant did not write down my name and address. Of course, I never ~~went~~ followed his suggestion to become an interpreter for the German police. He must have wondered why. Only next day I started realizing what a battle against the devil this was and how fortunate I have been to escape from his deadly grip. I was stiffly scared and at the same time felt strengthened. If I survived that, chances are I could survive any adversity. Since then the Incident of the salt as I baptized it, remains very vividly in my mind and in time of crisis, any crisis, I take strength from it.

As a fact, in the months and years ahead I tried to understand and analyze it. Germans have inherent respect for higher education. A complete secondary education in Germany even was unreachable for the masses. The material taught in a "Gymnasium" or High School was tremendous. It included Latin and Greek and a heavy load of history, literature and other more concrete subjects. It was in itself a rounded coveted education. The discipline and standards were strict and very rigid. To be on an academic level, it was already a matter of excellence and the student population in institutions of higher learning was in comparison limited. In Germany more than anywhere in Europe, the quality and thoroughness of teaching on all levels was perhaps the highest and the costliest. Though standards have been somewhat relaxed through the years, respect for education is always high.

Ph.D. degrees were and are given in Germany on all fields, even in subjects like teaching foreign languages and the like. A Ph.D. degree was the great achievement and the prefix "Herr Doktor" entitled the man to automatic respect. It was not important what kind of "Dektor" you were, if in arts or the evolution of the fleas or the warfare methods in prehistoric times. You were a "Doktor" and that was it. These patrol men believed me and accepted me in their minds as a "Doktor". The sergeant even once addressed me as "Herr Doktor". In addition, as Germans they were proud of foreigners getting higher education in their country. I must have been convincing. If they only would find that my only education was handling well their language, their wrath against me for misleading them, would be very hard.

I continued doing business with Germans, but by now I was extremely careful and often I lost profits for that. I hated to deal with them, but it was the only way of earning our daily bread without butter, as no butter was around. I searched for some other way to make a living and I found one, but on this a little later hereunder.

My sister Esther married in 1943 a fine young man named Alexander and everyone calling him Aleco. It was a very happy marriage. My brothers Errico and Moshe worked now home producing leather articles. Rosa did not travel anymore for black market food. She did it in small scale on the spot in Athens, buying from others and selling around. She managed relatively well. I had a temporary stand on the pavement of a street near the central market and sold dry beans, dry corn, wheat and the like out of big sacs. Pinhas did the same, repairing umbrellas in winter and waiting for the rains to come in all the other months. In spite of all, it rained in Greece in the same months as before.

The situation everywhere and in everything was getting worse. It was Stalingrad and in Libya General Rommel threatened Egypt and all of the Middle East. As in many other countries, the partisans and the resistance in Greece was becoming a real headache to the Germans. For the Jews also became worse. In Thessaloniki where nearly two thirds of all the Jews in Greece lived, they were already trapped and deportation in sealed cattle wagons was started. Few of them escaped to Athens. Thessaloniki was under the Germans and Athens was under Italian administration, which was that Jews were under Italian jurisdiction and greatly untouchable to the Germans. Italians never accepted anything against Jews. On the contrary they <sup>protected</sup> ~~accepted~~ them as much as they could under the covered wrath of their allies. But soon this would change too.

One of the most remarkable things at that period was the relations between the two close partners in that big war. You never saw Italian and German military going together or sitting together anywhere, not even speaking to each other publicly. The Italians had their own police, their own institutions, their own every-



thing and separate. It seemed as only high officers of both armies were in speaking terms to each other. The contempt of the Germans to the Italians and the fear of the Italians from the Germans were apparent all around. Each was carefully avoiding the other even in things like fighting the partisans. There was no mixed occupation. Certain islands were administered by the Italians and other only by the Germans.

In September 1943 Italy capitulated to the Americans and the British and the Germans took over administratively all of Greece. All the Italian military they could find was made prisoners of war to the Germans and were put to hard and low labor working in fortifications and the like. Thousands of Italians, whole intact military units perished in the country and especially in the island of Cephalonia. The Jewish population of Athens, about five thousand souls as it increased by the few escapees from Thessaloniki, was trapped to present themselves every week for registration. Meantime nearly fifty five thousand, all the Jewish population of Thessaloniki, had been deported. That town became the dream town for the Germans. "Judenrein", free of Jews.

Martha saved us. She went straight to the ~~himself~~ wolf's mouth, to the SS and met the feared major Rosenberg, the commander of the special unit to the liquidation of Jews. She told him, she is a Christian married to a Jew, she had three children and two brothers fighting in Russia as German soldiers. She was assured that this case is exempted by law and they gave a brown card exempting me from the measures against Jews. It was quite a feat. I was only restricted to be outside my home after five P.M. every day.

It is painful and of no purpose to describe all what happened to the Jews in Athens during the next six months after the Italian capitulation. All my relatives as many others were dispersed to the four directions of the big town. Most of them had false identifications and never telling to each other where they lived for fear to be coerced if arrested. They met by appointment rarely. On March twenty four they could catch about five hundred Jews as they registered and as many more raiding the Jewish homes promptly where they still found any.

At the end of 1943 my brother Moshe, age thirty five, was married with a girl of a well to do family from Thessaloniki, as they all were hiding in an Athens <sup>suburb.</sup> ~~marriage~~. An old man married them as it is allowed in the absence of a Rabbi. I learned about it weeks later. This marriage had a tragic end. An informer told the German police about those hiding Jews to gain a reward. In all about fifteen people were all caught except Moshe who miraculously escaped. After the war, we learned that his new wife perished in the crematoriums of Auschwitz. She was twenty one and a pretty girl.

I did not approach any more Germans for business or any deals and I did not want to have anything to do with them. My friend Johny from Vienna was since long away transferred some place in Scandinavia. After the war I learned that as he worked with a team defusing mines, one exploded and disfigured him. I believe, it was in Norway. We have made a few other friends among the German soldiers, only from Austria and South Germany. No one of them knew that we are Jewish.

But I had to make a living and again my good knowledge of German was helpful. The few translation offices in town were swarmed daily by people who needed papers written in German to submit to the Authorities. A lot of people were arrested constantly, mostly suddenly, often for no reason at all other on mere suspicion or anonymous accusation. Their close relatives, some of them very afflicted and hysterical, submitted letters to the German police that their man was innocent and arrested by mistake. Of course, such applications were of no real value. A good friend of mine had such a translation office off a main street. Translators of German were rare as nearly all of them worked for the Germans. I sat behind a partition, before a typewriter, I worked very fast. I received sixty per cent of the take. It was enough. Sometimes one of the small contractors who worked for the Germans came for a statement of account. Then, I received an additional tip.

My brother Errico and my brother in law David were caught in the last trap and deported to Auschwitz. All our other people succeeded going in the hiding. I saw sometimes Pinhas and gave him some money. He had found a smart hiding place all alone. Once I received a message to go to a hospital to see "my brother", I



did not know whom. I found Moshe there under an assumed name. A week earlier about thirty people all together shot at him from a truck as he ran in a vegetable garden where he worked. Using his military experience, he fell in a watering groove. Miraculously, one of the hundred bullets caught with him, just on his hind, a mere fleshy wound. All the thirty ran to him guns in the hands and somehow they got convinced the whole thing was a misunderstanding. Some people put Moshe on a handcart and brought him to that hospital, no questions asked. Now, he was doing well.

Terror was rampant in the air and on the streets. The Germans were executing fifty or one hundred Greeks for each German harmed. Sometimes they took hostages simply from the street. It was a matter of luck. Or blockading whole neighborhoods very early in the morning and arresting. The Germans had lost Africa, had lost Stalingrad and were retreating in Russia, the resistance everywhere and in Greece became stronger. Military courts were continuously in session. There were two kinds of sentences, liberty or death, mostly the latter. I remember one sentence which must be one of the most paradox in legal history.

Two teenagers went out in the night and stole some copper wire to be used for a telephone line. Not trusting each other, they divided it among themselves. In the morning they went to a dealer to sell their wire to be melted as copper, a rare metal at that time. The one sold it, the other kept his wire to offer it to an other dealer in the afternoon, hoping to obtain a higher price. Before noon, both were arrested and promptly brought before the German military court. In fifteen minutes their fate was sealed. The one was sentenced to death and the other released as innocent. The reasoning: Both said, they stole because they were starving. The fellow who sold his wire was believed and released. The other who kept the wire was not. His act was considered as sabotage. He was shot a few hours later. A strangely cruel King Solomon judgment. It was not unique. Those judges were real judges in civilian life, but those were no more normal times.

Life went on in anxiety, daily risk and fear. The resistance learned that I was fluent in German. Mid-morning a day, a well dressed guy would appear and ask for a translation handing me a sheet, a gun protruding at his belt when the coat unbuttoned. An other guy was outside the door. It gave the latest real news or called the Austrians to uprise or something like that. It was dynamite and I never translated faster than when such a man was there. It was with a great sense of relief when I saw them disappearing into the busy thoroughfare. I could not refuse and I never accepted payment. If caught, it would mean death for all of us. I had to help in other things and I did it willingly, though I was always running scared.

As the year 1944 advanced. My three kids were growing as well as it could be and all the time I succeeded providing for them the best I could, which was not always more than barely enough. In summer the Germans were showing signs of disorganization and the terror heightened. On October twelveth, hardpressed everywhere, losing battles in all fronts, their retreat ways in Northern Greece and Yugoslavia nearly totally cut off by the partisans, the Germans~~s~~ evacuated Athens, just three years and five months after they entered triumphantly that ancient town.

The wave of public jubilation broke out that morning and covered everything, the streets, the buildings and the hearts of the harassed men. The last act of the conquerors was to summarily exterminate most of their Greek collaborators, including interpreters. Freedom was there. What kind of freedom and under which price, it was an other story. The Greeks would ponder about it later. Now, they sang and danced and celebrated in the Streets of Greece.

After every venture and adventure, next morning comes the hangover. In some parts of Greece they believe that to cure a hangover after heavy drinking the evening before, the best medicine is to drink a glass of the same liquor. People were embittered with the long occupation. Now they would fight each other and they did it for years with utter ferocity.

Our family came again together and since long we were seeing each other on



a daily basis once again. Only Errico was missing from the nine Seville brothers and sisters. Missing was also David, the husband of our sister Sara, the new wife of Moshe and Moshe Habib, the husband of our sister Rosa. Though separated, they were not divorced. Our parental house was out of our hands. Our apartment has been given by the Germans over to an unknown family to us with everything we had left inside. My first way the morning after the Germans had left was to go to the Seville apartment and tell those people that I give them two hours to disappear from there or else. They were scared and asked time up to the same afternoon. I told them, O.K. and I don't ask for any rent for the six months they lived there. The same story was with the rented apartment of Errico. His wife Rachel and daughter Lisa came out of hiding. We had their apartment back in a few hours.

As the last German left town, people started streaming into the town from hiding in suburbs, near and far villages and mountains, in all kinds of garments, some even barefooted. All the living Jews were seemingly gathering together, all of them totally destitute and hungry and their only way was to the Melidoni street, the one block street of the Synagogue. Hundreds of people were there day and night, coming and going, asking each other for relatives, discovering one intact and alive, hearing about deportation, torture and death of an other. It was quite a spectacle. The outbursts of sorrow, crying, happiness and laughter when close people discovered each other, all the scale of human emotions, were there all around and at every corner. There were two Synagogue buildings opposite to each other. The one was promptly occupied by people who had no place to go. Every little space was taken. The other which was smaller, could with difficulty kept out of occupation.

As in the first days the Greek government and most authorities which worked with the Germans disappeared until the exile government arrived to take over, so was with the Jewish community. The Germans had ~~had~~ looted everything and vandalized files, holy utensils and books, even furniture.

To us organization and assistance came swiftly. Soon a gentleman in his early forties in an American captain uniform named Israel Jacobson appeared in the Melidoni street and declared: I represent the Joint Distribution Committee of New York. Put a committee of your own together. Let's talk. I am organizing a JDC office in Athens. I need to hire a secretary-interpreter. I have amounts of money to distribute if they can be distributed responsibly and properly. Loads of clothing are on the way to here. More people to help are on the way from America. The appearance of that serious man with the immaculate American captain's uniform lifted for sure the spirits of everyone there.

The committee was soon formed very democratically. Someone appointed himself and someone else, then both appointed an other and so on. As people arrived from all places, survivors originating from a number of other towns, many were not known. We were the only organized group in town for help and this attracted some other people trying to benefit. So, in that committee, men originating from other towns were added to our committee to testify and recognize certain people and their needs. We made hastily catalogs off base of any information we could get. I was a member of that committee which reached at one time to have thirty five members. A smaller executive committee among them, investigated needs and took prompt action.

The work of that committee was very pressing and urgent. Aside of distributing money on judgment of each case, we had to care about return of homes in cooperation with the Greek authorities, finding work for people, buying tools for people who could go their own way, like a sewing machine, some raw material, rent a place for those from out of town, caring for children left behind and a lot of other tasks. Soon big quantities of clothing arrived from America. We rented a deserted shop in a small street and everyone went there to browse and take what he needed. Everyone worked voluntarily with no pay.

But I had to make a living. Now British military forces replaced the Germans in and all around Athens. I had lost much of my fluency in English for



not using it since several years, but I could always understand and make myself understood in it. So, I took a small carton box with khaki ties and some flints for lighters I knew were selling and roamed the places occupied by British soldiers advertising loudly my merchandise: Ties, flints for lighters, ties. They were hanging out of the small box, visible from far. I had with me a canvas bag hanging from my arm, as the transaction was mostly in kind, the preferred merchandise being cigarettes which were in scarce then. It was double profitting, from the ties and then from selling the cigarettes. Better than nothing.

The simmering <sup>storm</sup> ~~storm~~ broke soon loose. In the government extreme rightists and extreme leftists participated and everyone wanted the entire government for himself. In the capital armed partisans of both shades were established and the class became inevitable. On December first a savage civil guerrilla war broke out with roughly half of the town to each one's hands. The leftists' police arrested thousands of citizens who collaborated with the Germans and executed them summarily. The rightists arrested thousands of people and deported them to Libya in Africa. Murderous battles took place in the streets every day. Finally, the rightists and the British won the field. It last<sup>ed</sup> a whole month with several thousand<sup>ed</sup>s of dead and executed. That civil war last for about ten years more and costed many more thousands of killed, maimed and crippled people, a lot of destruction. Greece had~~ed~~ not yet recovered fully from that tragic decade.

Commerce was normalizing and at the beginning of 1945 I found part time work with a small number of export offices one of which was of my previous employers in Crete who now had established an office in Piraeus. I made a modest earning. The situation in the country was very tense, military courts very often condemning leftists to death. They were shot promptly. It was dangerous to say anything which could be interpreted as criticism or sympathizing to the left. Pinhas has reopened his repair umbrella shop. Moshe worked home in leather articles. By now the entire parental home was inhabited only by Rosa, Moshe and Pinhas

In March or April who appeared in Athens of all people? Our brother Er-

rico, broken in body and spirit, a man of forty four looking much older. He came straight from Auschwitz or ~~for~~ <sup>from</sup> the purgatory for that matter. A few people had already appeared back from there, but chances for people over thirty or thirty five to return were nil. The ratio of returnees was no better than 1:500 or more than that. Our family was a rarity at that time as there was no family intact among the Jews in Greece anymore. David, our brother in law, Moshe Habib and the new wife of our brother Moshe~~d~~, all perished into the flames of the crematorium. We all nine brothers and sisters Sevilla survived. I great luck.

The situation in Greece deteriorated greatly. Savage battles and fighting were taking place between leftists and rightists in many places in the country and the islands, both having organized armies, the one side helped materially by the British and Americans and the other side by Russia and having access into neighbouring Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Albania for respite and reorganization. And this thing was becoming greater and greater with the military courts in constant session sentencing to death.

Martha was very brave all the time, a precious mother and wife, strict with the children, a clean person. By now she was accepted in the minds of all my people though there was still some friction, especially with my sister Rosa, an underground friction. The children were coming along well. Our little girl Louise was now ~~three~~ <sup>two</sup> and half years old and very cute. Daniel was five and Leon just over ten. The boys were very fond of each other. They survived well the cruel war years. What the children missed was good clothing, but with the ingenuity of Martha this handicap was minimized. Leon since already three years had developed an emphasized affinity to sketching and painting and was showing a real talent to it. He used to sit alone with a scrap book of fifty or one hundred sheets and fill them with one animal in all kinds of positions, a lion or a horse concentrating in anatomy. I thought, it was the promise for an artist and should like to help him. At the same time he was restless. He was in the fourth grade in the public school and could by now handle well the Greek language.



Above all, I and the children have very apparently saved our lives by her daring intervention at the Gestapo. Furthermore, Martha was ready to help anyone ~~to help~~ who came to her asking and in distress. People in our street held her high and we were never bothered by anyone though anyone with even a remote relation to anything German was put under stark scrutiny in those immediate after war days. But we could not speak in German openly as we did always before. For years people connected German with the Nazis and the war. In the meantime Martha had learned enough Greek to handle it sufferably. This was in all the European countries which were occupied and suffered under the Germans. I remember that three years later, in a tramway in Prague, Czechoslovakia, as I was chatting with someone in German, a couple of passengers got wild and insulted us. Things calmed down as the man explained, I was a Greek who could speak only German in addition to Greek. And this was 1948.

Victor and Victoria had a second child, again a girl. This was my fourth niece. My sister Leah and her disabled husband Marc Mevorah/ lived now in our parental home and expecting their first child. He was a skilled welder and he had just opened a small workshop.

World war II ended in May, seven months after the occupation of Greece was terminated. Now, the horror of the Jewish tragedy could be approximately estimated. From about ninety thousand souls in all of Greece, there were now about six thousand left including all those who were not caught and deported. An other thousand or two had succeeded to emigrate to Israel or other countries. The greatest part of the communities in other towns have been wiped out for good. In the Thessaloniki community of fifty five thousand people, there were now less than one thousand souls, all returned from the concentration camps or from places in Greece and other countries where they were hiding. Like in Istanbul so in Thessaloniki, the Jewish community was several centuries old with glorious tradition and history. During those few years, everything was looted. Even the old cemetery, monuments and ancient tombstones sold away as construction materi-  
/al.

In the Athens' Jewish community now sat an elected committee of eleven persons and I was not one of them, though I helped voluntarily in various capacities. Once there I came in contact with the organization in Israel "Aliyat Hanoar" translated immigration of the youth. Founded by a great American woman named Henrietta Szold in the last pre-war years, had an impressive record. They saved many thousands of <sup>children</sup> ~~years~~ from Germany, sometimes even paying ransom money, other thousands from occupied countries during the war and many more thousands after the war searching and locating them everywhere, from the streets, monasteries, private houses to all kinds of institutions in scores of countries.

They were taking orphaned children from Greece as well as children who had their parents if the latter were willing to let them. They offered good schooling, good treatment, the parents would keep all their natural rights on the child and could take him or her back at any time, without any payment now or later. I talked with the representative. Many people like me were registering their children only to send them away to a better environment. I explained that ~~the~~ my boy had a particular inclination to painting and I was assured, if so, it would be encouraged and cultivated. I talked it over with Martha. The general situation in the land was that bad. The boy was not happy or very happy. I talked it over also with him. He knew that some of his friends would go. He was for it. We decided to send him. It was a painful decision, but we never repented it. It has benefitted him considerably.

We had always the idea of emigrating some place. Once I asked information about the United States and was discouraged. The quota was so minimal against the number of people applying for visas, that we would have to wait twenty years and more. We had no relatives any other place in the world and we had no money. We thought, if we succeed later to emigrate to an other country, we might take Leon with us. It did not occur us at that time to go to Israel, for many and various reasons.

At the beginning of August I brought Leon to Piraeus to board the ship.



The boy was alert and mature over his age. He understood very well that he was separating ~~for~~<sup>from</sup> us may be for years to come. He was sad and when I asked him if he would prefer that we return home, he said no, he wanted to go. If he would say yes, I would bring him back and forget about sending him away. There were about two or three hundred children in ages of six to sixteen. The "Aliyat Ha-noar" had these children in the annual British quota, meaning that there was no risk of having them confined in Chyprus or refusing to let them land in Israel. The ship sailed next morning. I hugged and kissed my son there on the pier. It was my second separation from him, presumably for long time to come. I prayed that it would not be for very long, but it came to be. As I returned to Athens that evening, my heart was heavy and at the same time I was glad the boy went to a good school far away. We had heard how wonderful this organization was for children. It was more than education it was giving to them.

A couple of days later, we received a short letter from Leon written to us from the ship, before sailing. A few brave lines telling us he thought on us and everything was fine. I still keep that piece of paper.

We went on living and trying for the better. The years 1946 and 1947 came and passed. We always lived in the same small apartment Martha had rented when I was still in Crete. Though I earned now more, we did not want to make the move because our rent was low and I thought, in case of not leaving Greece, I would start my own import business as a representative agent of foreign manufacturers. Every while I converted any money I could save in gold pounds and put them aside. The situation in Greece was always in turmoil, the civil war fought strongly in the mountains of Northern Greece, the military courts all the time sentencing leftists to death. I worked now in half dozen of commercial offices and my earnings were somewhat higher than being employed in one only office and tied-up all day.

Leon was writing to us in the first year in Palestine. He was happy and content. But as time passed his letters became more rare. It seems that he had more and more difficulty writing in Greek. I saw it from his letters. He spoke

German fluently when he left, but he could not write it. Once he wrote us in Hebrew of which I knew only how to read in books without understanding it. I brought his letter to the Rabbi who also had some difficulty in reading it. I wrote Leon to try always Greek and it was a good exercise to keep knowing it. My information was that he was well cared of and he was a good student. Someone I knew went even to visit him and reported to me the best.

Victor and Victoria had a third child, once again a girl. In 1946 my brother Moshe married to our only girl cousin Rosa Weinberg, he thirty eight and she still unmarried at thirty six. After a year, they had their first child, a girl. Two years later another child, again a girl. In 1946 my youngest sister had a boy. It was an unusual situation with our new generation. In our so numerous family the only boys bearing the family name were only my two sons and among our sisters, there was only that one boy of Leah and Marc Mevorah. It remained so for all the future.

Now I was working in more commercial offices and I did some business on my own on the side. We lived modestly and I saved regularly some money. We should be content, but the main nagging worry we had was not having a regular contact with Leon in Palestine. We missed him and I was afraid that as time passed we would lose him entirely, that he would not recognize us as his close relatives. To try to take him back to Athens would not be wise. The boy was happy there where he was and in Greece the overall situation was still more tense, the ~~war~~ civil war fought savagely, the military courts and all. I did not know what to do. I hoped to succeed to bring the family to some other country.

In 1948 I went with one of my employers to Prague, Czechoslovakia on serious business. In a complicated deal this man remitted a huge amount of money to a factory producing Diesel motors though he knew they could not deliver. His idea was: The money remitted in 1948, as soon as the war would end, he wanted to be the first to have these motors. I explained to that man at that time that it was foolish to remit the money like that. Czechoslovakia was occupied by the



Germans and the money had to pass first through the Reichsbank in Berlin. I told Spyro, if Germany loses the war you will lose your money and if Germany wins, you again will lose your money. The factory owner refused to accept the money and be tied up. The money was deposited in Bank in Prague.

We arrived there in March of 1948, just a day or two after the death of the State secretary Mazzyrk who jumped or was thrown from a window. We visited the annual Fair. The country was by now under a communist regime and everything was nationalized. We met with the owner of that factory. He was forbidden to enter his factory and was powerless. We visited the organization which had taken over all similar factories in the country. Spyro, a man in his mid-fifties, knew only Greek and aside of knowing well about motors, he had no other education. I negotiated with the Government people. They said, nothing doing. This is money remitted by the Reichsbank in Berlin, therefore German money. Germany owes us a lot in reparations. Nothing doing. Very apparently much was in the fact that Czechoslovakia was under a strict leftist regime while Greece was extreme right. They promised only to deliver us a few parts and asked for a list. They never delivered them. All the money got lost for Spyro.

In the sixteen days we were there, we visited many interesting places because of the Eastern holiday. Someone whom I knew when he had visited Athens on business before, drove us with his car to Karlsbad, Marienbad and other places. Also the motor factory owner drove us to Bruenn and other places, We had a good time. Then it was Switzerland and several towns in Italy.

1948 was ending and we were very anxious because since long we had no correspondence from Leon. My repeated letters were simply not answered. Palestine was in turmoil and in bad fight. The State of Israel was proclaimed a few months before and though an armistice was declared, nobody knew exactly how things were. We had constantly contradictory news. I knew a man in Tel Aviv named Goldenberg who had an import office. I asked him to visit my boy. He could not locate him. We were unhappy and especially Martha.

At the beginning of 1949, we decided to emigrate to Israel. I knew, it would not be easy to create my own business there, but I would try. I had a little money. We were increasingly concerned about Leon. I sold some of our meager belongings and all the remainder I left to my sister Rosa to do as she wants. All my sisters came to the Port of Piraeus for the farewell on May 22, 1949. ~~Our hopes were high.~~ The vessel came from Italy full of people. From Greece other people boarded going to the new State of Israel. The hopes of everyone were high and so were ours. Late afternoon, we boarded the overcrowded liner.

One of the great gifts of destiny to man is the ignorance of the future, of what is to come. If man would know the future, life on earth would be impossible or a sheer agony. Ignorance is hope and hope is strength to sustain all the many adversities and create all what is good and useful.



THE LAND OF MILK AND HONEY

The Bible says that "Moses sent six pair of spies to see what the land they wanted to conquer and settle was like. The five pair returned reporting that this is a land 'that eateth the inhabitants thereof'. The sixth pair returned bearing a pole from which hung a branch with one huge cluster of grapes and branches with pomegranates and figs. They assured that the land they spied upon 'zvaat Halav Vedvash', flowing milk and honey. At an other place the Ancient Testament mentions that the children of Israel were in the deserts for forty years in constant warfare trying to conquer a place to settle down. Finally they had a good general, Joshua son of Nun who located a weak point and invaded the town of Jericho after he kept the sun from setting in the evening. They settled in the land of Canaan after four hundred years they lived in the land of Goshen, in Egypt.

On May 25, 1949 we arrived at the port of Jaffa which was still small and undeveloped. Tel Aviv had and has not a port. I did not anticipate such crowds everywhere. Before leaving Athens, I cabled to Leon in English at his school of Kfar Vitkin I knew he was. When we arrived, he was not there, to our disappointment. Busses transported all our humanity to a place about twenty miles from Tel Aviv or so, named Beer Yaakov, or Jacob's Deep Well. On a large area there was a sea of tents well arranged, a town of tents, The few buildings and wooden structures scattered there were used as offices, kitchens and eating halls, for storage and other purposes. It was much confusion, but we succeeded to have a tent on bare earth, four military beds, bedspreads, blankets, pillows, towels and soap.

This town in the open was as neatly organized as it could be. There was much movement in and out, newcomers and others who after a few months succeeded to have a job and a home elsewhere to settle. All kinds of peoples, all ages, all previous stations in life, originating from scores of countries, speaking in scores of languages though the predominant languages were Yiddish, Spanish and German. Food was distributed every morning, noon and evening. Many people

who had some funds or worked somewhere, made entirely or partly their own cooking on coal contraptions outside their tents. There were even a few small grocery "stores" under tents. I never have seen so many different people all living at one place with a very minimum of trouble and disorder. The area before was British Army Barracks.

Next morning I took the bus to Tel Aviv and went to the "Sochnut", the Jewish Agency, to the office of "Aliyat Hanoar", the Immigration of youth to ask about Leon. They did not know anything, but they promised to locate and send the boy that same afternoon. I bought a few things, a broom, some dishes and the like and returned to Beer Yaakov. Leon did not appear that day and we became impatient. Next morning I went again to Tel Aviv and they assured me they did the necessary and soon the boy would come to us. Martha was very distressed. I came back to our tent at noon as the official suggested. My son was not there. I wondered, what he would look like now, over fourteen, nearly four years after we were separated.

Early afternoon a man from Turkey living with his family a few tents from us, with whom I casually was acquainted the day before, came to us. I had mentioned to him that I was looking forward to meeting my son. He told me now that a boy was running since hours from tent to tent asking for someone named Sevillea. He spoke only in Hebrew and nobody could make out what he wanted. Was he my son? I jumped on my feet, where is he I asked? In my tent, he replied, come. And there he was, a slender boy with dark blond complexion, a healthy natural look, cool and alert with an air of maturity. He recognized me.

He smiled at me and said in Greek "Kalimera Baba", good day dad and this was all what he could say in Greek. I spoke to him in German and he did not know it at all. He talked to me in Hebrew which I did not understand. When we reached our tent we all greatly rejoiced the reunification after all those years, but we had a minor tragedy in our hands. We could not communicate. It was as if someone took a sponge and erased from the boy's memory ~~two~~ <sup>three</sup> languages he before ~~new~~ <sup>Knew</sup> and handled to near perfection. Was it that possible. Such total



lack of communication! Not being able to talk with your own fourteen year old son from whom you were separated only four years before. A minor tragedy.

I did the only sensible thing I could. I left him with his brother and sister to roam around all the time alone. Danny and Louise spoke only in Greek and in a few days Leon used again, though very sparingly, Greek. I remember an incident which gave me much to think. After a few days, I asked Leon what he wants to be later, after school. He understood, but he could not find the word in Greek. So, he said in Hebrew "Ro'e". One of the few words I knew in Hebrew, I understood the meaning to be "I see". It did not make sense. I asked someone and again someone there. They told me, alright, it means "I see". At the office there was an oldtimer, a German woman, to whom I told my story and she solved the riddle for me. She said, yes "Ro'e" means "I see", but with a different spelling and the same pronunciation it means also "Shepherd". I was displeased with the idea that the ambition in life of that bright boy was to become a shepherd of sheep. It was high time that I take him under my care.

Leon remained with us eight days before returning to his school named Ben Shemen in a place at the sea shore not far from Natanya and on the highway to Haifa. It was considered one of the best schools in Israel. That place was about half an hour by bus from us or so. It was a mixed school of children from eight to sixteen with four hours daily work in agriculture, poultry, cattle on a vocational basis.

A few days later, I went to Kfar Vitkin to the school, to see things and visit Leon. A vast area with a lot of buildings and wooden structures next to an agricultural settlement. This school was a selfsufficient organization, growing most of their food, most of the help in the kitchens and everywhere children on a rotating basis, the students living nearly without any supervision in individual housings in groups of ten or so, everything friendly, clean and neat, a great camaraderie, no juvenile problems at all, with no visible authority except a code of honor understood, not imposed, a full democracy.

Leon was working with poultry that afternoon. They had an experimental station with thousands of chicken managed by an elderly couple from Germany named Mendelsohn, trained ornithologists, who applied the latest methods and constantly experimented. For certain chicken they kept individual cards in file, genealogy, feeding, eggs laid, output by season and the like. We became good friends. As I arrived at the school, I asked several children where to find Leon Sevilla and nobody knew the name though they were at the age of Leon. When finally I said the word Yavan, that is Greece, someone exclaimed: This must be Arie hatsayar, the painter. They had changed the name to Arie which in Hebrew means the Lion.

I was several times more in Kfar Vitkin to Leon and he came often to us. In a couple of months he familiarized himself again with Greek and we could now converse understandably. Each time I roamed around in that school or talked with the Mendelsohns and other people, I marvelled how well everything functioned, games, work, studies, everyday life, theatrical productions, collective pranks, how everyone knew what to do, how to behave and especially what not to do. An evening I saw a theatrical performance only with early teenagers which was nothing short of very good, though it was a difficult subject. It was the "Donkey and his Shadow" one of Aesop's Greek philosophical myths, played in Hebrew faithfully. Leon was now an accomplished artist painter, as I was told. Among several hundreds students, there were only two with such a talent and a particular teacher came for them two or three times a week in Kfar Vitkin. One was Leon who still filled continually scrapbooks with sketches. He was making all the humorous decorations on walls of the halls when there were festivities and he painted continuously.

Time passed and we got somewhat accustomed living in our tent in Beer Yaa-kov. I went often to Tel Aviv, but I could not find any work for me, which was in imports or exports because they were not yet well organized. To rent an apartment would take all my money or more than that. The "Sochnut" or Jewish Agency, was erecting small dwellings in various places, a part of them with roofs of corrugated aluminum sheets, which gave to people in the tents on a priority basis, which meant that we had to wait at least for several months.



There were over ten thousand people in the tent camp. Some people from Greece came to me because I knew languages. We made a kind of committee, I as the spokesman and tried with the "Sochnut" in Tel Aviv for a place to live outside of that camp. They proposed to us to form a bigger group or be part of an other one and settle in a "Moshav" on a similar line as a "Kibbutz". A "Kibbutz" is an autonomous agricultural settlement where everyone works according to his abilities for no pay and all his needs of living are satisfied without payment. Everything belongs to the Kibbutz and the Kibbutz belongs to the individual as long as he stays there as a member. If it happens that he earns any outside money, it belongs to the Kibbutz. It frees you from any worries of everyday life and handling money and provides you with all what you need including medical care and old age.

The Moshav is the same on capitalistic lines. The "Sochnut" gives you ten dunam land with an adjacent small house, all the implements, irrigation tubes, seeds, fertilizers and what more needed and all the instruction and <sup>etc</sup> you in business. The land and the house are on perpetual loan to you as long as you or your descendants stay and work there. The tools, implements and the other material are on credit and you pay whenever possible. The produce, eggs, milk etc. are sold for you through the village cooperative. There is a grocery cooperative store, a school, a Synagogue, a small medical center. You work better, you have in the family more working hands, you plan better, you earn more. At the end, after ten or twenty years, as in every community, some people are richer and other remain mere workers with daily wages, often working for the successful. You receive one cow, a number of chicken and the like. After a few years one has several cows and an other none because of neglect or mismanagement.

Nearly three months had passed since our arrival and we could not stay in that <sup>camp</sup> very long more. Some were there since nearly a year and every day went in Tel Aviv to work. My money was running lower. A "Moshav" seemed to be a solution I figured out, with all this help, a small house and all, we could make a start. We recruited some more Greeks in the camp, the "Sochnut" had other small groups

like ours to which they acquainted us though nobody or very few could speak with some of them because of the language barrier.

Our group numbered about thirty families and the "Moshav" was scheduled for one hundred families. The age of the family heads had not to be over the early forties and I was at the limit, forty four. The other groups were each from Persia, Iraq, Libya and Turkey. My people could communicate only with the Turkish in our common Spanish. As it happened, I was the only man who could communicate with all and in our first meeting of the representatives of all groups, in presence of the "Sochnut" people I had to translate what each was saying to the others and vice versa. The Libyans spoke well Italian because it was an Italian colony. The Persians spoke all well French, because they learned in the Schools of the "Alliance Française". Of course, all Iraqis spoke fluent English and with the Turkish it was our Spanish. As for the two people of the Sochnut, it was German. I had also the Greeks and their language. It took us several hours to deliberate about very little. Aside of the "Sochnut" men, nobody handled sufficiently or at all the language of the land, Hebrew.

We were transferred to a place named Kfar Saba Aravit built on a hill and near the Jordanian border and the town of Kelkiliya, just a couple of miles from the Israeli small town of Kfar Saba. Our Kfar Saba Aravit was a big Arab village with may be one hundred houses, some of them made of simple mud and straw and other of stones solidly. The place was deserted and ruined, most of the houses damaged. Every family found some place to live in, people made repairs where feasible, in some large buildings still standing went more than one families to live. Anyway all people were settled.

It was a sociological microcosm, people clinging more to others of same origins, different customs, languages and behaviour. A committee was fast formed and a cooperative grocery was erected. There were a lot of everyday problems and difficulties and I was there working and helping actively.



We were shown a blueprint of the new village to be built for us, on an adjacent valley like wide terrain which might have been laid there uncultivated since many centuries, or it looked like that, a kind of dried swamps. Soon construction people came to build and material arrived. Most of us were to be hired as workers there to earn a living. All around there were dense "Pardessim" or orange groves which needed constant care, irrigation, cleaning and harvesting the fruit for several months in the season.

It was like hard labor to me, unaccustomed in manual work of this kind. I worked in construction, in the orange groves, sometimes on new highways and similar backbreaking affairs. I did it because I had to do it, there was nothing else to do and to prove something. This<sup>1</sup> lasted eight months. Finally the one hundred houses were built. They were primitive brick structures of one and a half very small rooms and two and a half small rooms for the "big" families. No auxiliary rooms, as bathroom, Kitchen etc. A toilet was put about fifty feet away. A faucet for water was laid outside each home. To have a shower, you had to hang a bedspread around a tree~~x~~ and douse yourself with water from a rubber hose connected to that faucet. To move any place over one foot from your home, you had first clean and make pathways on all that wild vegetation.

In May 1950, exactly one year after we arrived in the country, we entered the new Moshav - agricultural village. In spite of all, we were happy and we celebrated. We had a house of our own, a field to work it, instruction how to do it, implements, a cow, fifty chicken and all needed to a good start. But above all we had idealism, helping to build up the new State. Leon was always in the same school and coming often to us. He spoke now fluently Greek again. Daniel was ten years old and Louise eight, all wonderful children. Both spoke now some Hebrew and Daniel started going to the local school. Martha worked hard against all our difficulties and trying to make life easier for the family, never complaining. It was by far not an easy life, but we were content.

The truth was that I could not cope with physically and could not adjust

socially well. The little money I had brought from Greece was nearly totally exhausted. I worked to all kinds of jobs I could find, in the orange groves, in construction of roads and housing and the like, but never permanent because I could not cope, lifting heavy bags of cement and the like and employers could not have much use of me. We cleared our land and put on a part of it various vegetables under the main care of Martha. It was not easy but we were full of hope that with patience and perseverance, we certainly would better our lot materially.

In 1952 I succeeded to put also Daniel in the same school of Leon, Ben Shemen in Kfar Vitkin. He felt well there and soon assimilated. That year was Leon to get out of there after six years. I thought very much about his future and did not know what to do. He was a good artist with a many-sided talent in painting, sculpture, graphics and other fields. Since early times he read much and by now he read voraciously and maturely, especially more about art. In Kfar Vitkin they had a fine library.

More in those times a very great emphasis in Israel was given to agriculture and related endeavours. Rightly so because the main export activity was in fruit and a number of vegetables which then constituted the backbone of the Israeli economy. Furthermore, the new agricultural settlements along the long frontiers had to be manned with people who would base on agriculture.

Of course, the future of Leon was not in becoming a shepherd and he since long forgot about it. There was only one ~~///~~ school of Fine Arts albeit a famous one, Bezallel, in Jerusalem, but it was more for graphics and advertising, not for free painting. The ultra orthodox Jews do not tolerate painting and sculpture because of the second commandment "Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any manner of likeness". To day there are many more facilities for arts in Israel, galleries, art exhibitions, and learning institutions than at that time and now the great emphasis is no more on agriculture.

There were a number of good painters in the land at that time, but most of their work remained unsold and they had to do something else to stay alive, very often hard manual work. Most of them originated from Germany. They were living in



Acre, in Gallilee and in a village named E'in Hod, near Haifa. Up to present, these two places are art centers in Israel.

An elderly painter from Germany of previous fame was living and working in his art in Kyriat Ahavim, near Jerusalem and took Leon with him to teach him and to enable him to study at Bezallel in the nearby town. At that time, the only University in Israel was in Jerusalem and it was a costly proposition because in this mid-sized town there were too many students and too few part time jobs. For Leon it was the only possibility to be with the Bezallel. But it was still not as ~~as~~ easy as that. In the first place, in that school emphasis was on commercial art and Leon with his much practicing and reading since many years was not satisfied there. After a short while he stopped going there and concentrated with the painter in Kyriat Anavim. He remained there for six months. Then returned home to us.

Matters were going bad with agriculture with us. The first year we planted vegetables, the yield was too small because of inexperience, though there was a good instructor. The second year we planted much more. We lost all the crop to heavy rains which turned the entire field to a swamp. The mud was so deep that you could <sup>not</sup> enter the place for over one month. Martha worked very hard. We received a cow which we could not handle and as a few others we returned it to the "Sochnut" while most of the villagers stuck with it and in a few years had several heads. I could not learn how to milk it and Martha did it. We received fifty chicken and a contraption to house them. It seemed promising and hoped to create a poultry business with time. At the beginning we had a satisfactory production of eggs and the hens hatched regularly. Then the disaster, an epidemic and many hundreds of chicken died overnight in the village.

It was for us a big mistake to be in a Moshav. We should know that we could not succeed in something like that and from the beginning we should find our way to a city as so many others did. Finally I would have something to do for a living, as I always did in my previous life. Now all my material resources were out. In addition, nobody was encouraged to leave a "Moshav" unless he could do it all by himself. A few have already done it after they secured a job outside, but

they had a trade and they were younger. Martha tried hard to make flowers for sale and she knew something of it. We heard that flowers started to be exported from Israel to Europe. We did not succeed because of lack of adequate resources and because it was too soon. This thing got on the way later when it was organized better by the Department of Commerce.

In 1952 I went to a school (they called it seminary) to get trained as an agricultural accountant and a "Mazkir", the secretary in a "Moshav", the liaison man to the Jewish Agency and the Authorities. Incidentally it was near that same Kfar Vitkin. The study was for about five months. I could go home only in weekends. I received a little help money from the seminary, by far not enough for the family. Hard times for us, but no alternative. The problem was, we had no dwelling in any place outside the "Moshav" and rents plus key money were sky high for us. We stuck to this life with the firm conviction that we will somehow make /it.

Out of that seminary, I was placed as a "Mazkir" or secretary in a new "Moshav" near the town of Ramleh, all of them originating from Egypt and all of them belonging to the only religious sect ever, the Karaites. Their number and influence has been always small. They strictly adhere to the Ancient Testament and do not recognize any other Jewish scripture whatsoever. I was with them nearly one year and my salary was paid by the "Sochnut" as it always is with new settlements. As a man of their own was trained, he took over as a "Mazkir" and I was out. They offered me a similar job with a Moshav near Beersheva, really very far from my "Moshav" and difficult to be home twice weekly with the job I had. I remained for months without working, working a little here and a little there and always short of funds.

The name of my "Moshav" was Neveh Yamin which is the name of an unknown Arab prophet. Near there was a little shrine on the highway where a group of Arabs came periodically to worship or something like that. We did not touch that unguarded shrine. Now Leon was eighteen and ripe to be drafted. In September 1953, he did. After the primary training, he was with the navy. I was worried about his future. I thought, after his discharge, I have to see that he goes abroad to study. Not an easy thing, but the only sensible thing to do for him.



In 1953 I learned that a particular quota of visas to the United States were granted to Greece and that many Jewish families applied and were going to the States. It was because of the earthquakes and the number of visas was five thousand. I applied through the American Consulate in Athens without much hope that we will succeed to it. Even if it was so there were difficulties and one of them was total lack of funds to pay our passage.

In the same year I found a job with "Tnuvah" the national vegetable, fruit and dairy cooperative. They had well organized reception centers receiving the produce during the night, selling it under a complicated kind of auction, keeping only a moderate percentage for expenses and crediting the producers. Like that, the highest possible price was obtained. The different "Tnuvah" centers were in constant contact and if a produce was in abundance in one place and scarce in an other, promptly the surplus was shipped away. "Tnuvah" was and is a huge organization very smoothly functioning. They did more than that, guiding the farmers what to produce and what not, exploring foreign markets for export, making research and introducing new methods and cultures.

I worked at the reception center of Petah Tikvah, a mid-sized town on the highway to tel Aviv, about fifteen miles from Kfar Saba near where I lived and as many miles on the other direction to Tel Aviv. It was a hardship job for me, but no alternative. From Neveh Yamin, my house, I had to take the bus or go by foot to Kfar Saba, about one mile. There, I had to take an other bus to Petah Tikvah. Work in the huge depot began at six P.M. Trucks from all kinds of settlements, Kibbutzim, Moshavim or private estates brought all kinds of vegetable and fruit. The crates were of standard weight each for each kind of produce. I was there putting the crates on the rolling scale, adding or taking off to make the proper weight in each crate. Then helping to pile of the crates of each kind separately. It was a heavy physical work for me, but it was paying well.

We finished the work at one or two o'clock in the morning. Everyone was going home but not I, because I had no bus for Kfar Saba before five thirty A.M. So I remained there reading, or strolling in the deserted small town depending on

the weather and seating in the dairy reception center next door which opened about three A.M. or earlier, to deliver milk and dairy products to big cooperative trucks for distribution to various localities. There, I could catch a truck going my direction and reach Kfar Saba before or a little after four A.M.

Once in Kfar Saba, I had to wait for the first bus to go the one mile to Neveh Yamin, home, which I did not dare do by foot because of the Arab marauders who frequently roamed that area so near at the proximity of the border, to steal a cow or kill a Jew. The first bus was at five fifteen. So, I reached home usually at five thirty in the morning, after having finished my work for four hours, dead tired. Rarely, a charitable milk truck driver made a deviation and brought me home earlier. He could not do that often because they also were hardpressed for time with the distribution.

This was five days a week, week in week out, month in, month out. I tried to find an other job, with a Bank, an accounting office, a big hotel in Tel Aviv and even gave successfully examinations with the Revenue Service. My age, nearing forty nine, was a handicap and to work in Tel Aviv, I had to be a resident of town. that/Without a residence, I could not be one. My son Daniel was always in the Ben Shemen school and came home every weekend or second one. A very bright boy, reading also very much and very alert, he was not so enthusiastic with agriculture as a career. I had not the means to put him in school or even in a vocational school. He was now fourteen and I was also very much concerned about his future. That year we could put also Louise in the Ben Shemen school. They called her now Aliza, meaning the joyful. She still keeps that name.

In our Moshav some people were succeeding well. One bought a tractor and <sup>an</sup> other a truck which they exploited with good profit. Families with several persons in working age, earned from outside work and from the activities in the Moshav. Some were leasing the fields of other people who worked outside and planted them mostly with peanuts which needed much work and care, but also yielded a good profit, if succeeding. Some members of the "Moshav" continued to leave and replaced by new families accepted by the committee of the village.



It was 1954 and life was more and more difficult. This adventure every night for me was too much physically. And I worried too much about other things. Since a year or two we could not work the land anymore except for some vegetables for our own use. As long as we were in a Moshav, school in the town on a secondary level was costly. We had to rent a home some place outside the Moshav for a lot of reasons and I did not <sup>know</sup> how. Leon was doing well in the navy and he was now a "Samal" a non-commissioned officer. At the end of 1954 we decided that Martha will return to Athens with Daniel and Aliza where the two children would go to school and would, at least partly, come out of the many difficulties we had. I would stay and of course, Leon and we would see what happens. Either later Martha and the two children would come back to us or I and Leon would go to Athens. It was a desperate solution where I did not see any. If they would come back to Israel, it would be only if I would succeed to have an other job and rent a small apartment in Tel Aviv.

On April of 1955 I put Martha and the two younger children on an Italian liner to Piraeus. Daniel, now fifteen was excited with the prospect of going to a school and pursuing an education and on the other side he was not very happy leaving Israel, his friends and the way of life he was accustomed. Indeed, Israel, a new country, was a very good place for the young, where youth is worshipped like always was and is in America. In Israel like in America the old is left somewhat behind and <sup>society</sup> ~~land~~ is geared and oriented to the youth.

Now, I remained with Leon who came to me every week ~~end~~ or second one and he was the only relative I had. I continued remained at the house in the Moshav because I had no other place to go and fifty years old I could not have an other job. The most logical could be to rent a place in Petah Tikvah and go home every night at one o'clock A.M. to rest like everyone else where I worked. I did not know what to do. From my salary I had to send a good part to Greece to sustain my half of the family living now there. Leon would be in the Army for an other year. I always was very neatly dressed, but now I neglected myself, I had a mustache and a two months beard. It was somehow like serving time.

My sisters and brothers in Athens helped Martha rent a small apartment and she found a part time job accompanying two small children of a family and teaching them German. They were not very happy. Daniel started re-learning Greek and registered in the ninth grade of an Athens public High School. Aliza went to the elementary school, I believe it was fifth grade, of a public school reserved only for Jewish children. Months succeeded months and as the year advanced to its end, I knew that in the few months ahead I had to decide the one way or the other.

Since one and a half year I had that night job in Petah Tikvah. In summer life was easier and in winter more difficult. I was reading very much and very few people were speaking to me in the "Moshav" anymore. I was considered a kind of recluse with my rundown appearance. My only good friends were the many dogs. As I arrived so early in the morning, most at the dawn, about five to ten dogs waited for me and I tried to have a few pieces of bread to give them. Some of them were wild and a stranger would risk his flesh appearing there, but these dogs were my good friends and often I stood there a little to talk to them. The houses of the Moshav were built in a circular manner on a huge area. My house was the fifth on the dirt road and as there was some good distance between houses, I had a bit to go as I entered from the highway.

It was not an agreeable dwelling and often field rats found refuge in it. I slept up to noon, I prepared a meal for myself, I wrote and read and about five P.M. I was on the road to work. Thursday and Friday evening no work and I remained home cleaning, reading and preparing my meals. If I had something to do in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem, I used to gress well and go on Friday morning. Later I had nowhere to go on Friday. I waited that Leon would be discharged and I was in close contact with my people in Athens. Very difficult times for me.

It was not an easy time and it would take long to describe it. I will refer to a characteristic incident only. It was in the early spring of 1956. It was a little before four o'clock in the morning when the Milk bus~~es~~ left me on the highway at the junction of the road to Kfar Saba. It was about fifteen minutes walk from



there to midtown. Just before it there was on a side road a maternity hospital serving this town of about thirty thousand people and the small surrounding localities. Just on the main road there was a big board panel standing on two beams with the name of the hospital and a strong light up there to make it well visible.

It was a good place to sit, I discovered, and wait for the time of my bus to Neveh Yamin. The terminal was just a hundred yards from there. So, when the weather was good, I used to sit on a stone at the foot of one of those beams and read a book I had always with me. A morning, it was four thirty, I heard a hard screeching suddenly and there was a police patrol car with two policemen. It was a jeep. They came out of it and asked me what I was doing there? Still sitting there I told them that I am reading. Take my word for it, I added joking. They wanted to know more and I told them briefly my story. They were satisfied.

It seemed peculiar to them anyhow, a middleaged worker sitting there in the night like that. One of them asked me what I was reading and handed him the book. It was Julius Ceasar by Shakespeare. I used to read more English at that time to familiarize myself more in it. The man knew well English because he originated from Iraq. He said, he prepared for college and he knew the book. They told me, stand up, we bring you home. On the way, he <sup>said</sup> ~~told me~~. You must be crazy, sitting there and reading Shakespeare, a "Meshugene", crazy. May be so, I replied.

Ten days later an other police jeep screeched before me. I was not every night at the Maternity hospital, just once or twice weekly. Now the policemen ~~were~~ were not the same and as I lifted my head they seemed to know about me. The one said, oh you must be the one who reads Shakespeare. I answered, this time it is not Shakespeare and not in English, but next time, I promise. He remarked, I cannot care less, do you want to go home? Thank you I told him, in ten minutes I will *have* my bus, an other time. Since then, sometimes, as I was on my way that piece of road walking to Kfar Saba and a police jeep was passing, it stopped, they called me Shakespeare and if possible to them, they brought me home, which it was for me a very ~~help~~ helping shot under the arm. They kidded me: Hey Shakespeare, have you to report anything? Or don't catch a cold.

In April Leon was discharged after two and a half years in the navy, a mature boy of twenty always very much for art, painting, sculpture and other. A good talent needing more study and work. If he would stay there and renounce to that talent, he had only one option. Stay with the navy in which he had a good standing. I knew he would never be entirely happy with that. It was not easy and apart of funds, therewere some other problems. Everything smoothened , by mid-May he boarded the ship to Piraeus to Join our family in Athens. I remained back to settle different matters. My goal was to manage the boy to have his necessary studies some place in Europe, France, Germany, Italy and the like. He wanted very much to specialize in theatrical settings and arrangements.

I had many pains to settle everything and on August 1956 I could board myself the ship to Piraeus in Haifa. I was not happy that afternoon when slowly the big Italian vessel, overcrowded with passengers, was sailing out of the port. I remembered how seven years and two and half months earlier, we arrived so hopefully at the rugged port of Jaffa, full of exciting expectation. Now, I had tears in my eyes looking the landscape of Haifa, the hill of Carmel with its villas and residences disappearing in the horizon. I was a failure. I should have tried everything to dwell and work in a town. I certainly would have found there a better way than that. I thought how I learned to love Israel and promised to myself to do all I will ever be able to help her in my life in any way I could. I felt very badly and very guilty. My father used to say that: "Contra la Verdad, no hay fuerza", you cannot fight against the truth or reality. As the dusk came and the evening was there and the town of Haifa was not more visible, I went to the restaurant and had a good dinner. Life has its rights. My neighbor in our four bed cabin was a Greek young lawyer named Shimon Levi.

Early in the morning in August ten, we arrived in Piraeus. There were three of my sisters and my two boys waiting for me. I felt well. My people told me that I did not look very well. I was very thin, about hundred twenty pounds. We were glad seeing each other.



At eight thirty we were in Athens, in the house of my sister Leah. An hour later I was with my two boys in town. My first way was to a leading daily to give a small ad about offering lessons in languages and correspondence in commercial offices on a part time basis. Then I acted starting putting our life in some order. It was in shambles.

Martha was not there. She was working in the Jewish children summer camp about twenty five miles from Athens. I knew, she had considerable difficulties being there alone. She had not always work and what I sent her from Israel in money was barely enough or not. My brothers and sisters could not do very much, not more than they ~~they~~<sup>did</sup>. My younger sister was wonderful as she always was and is wonderful to anyone in the family in need and never failed to be. With Martha at that camp was also Aliza. It was a job just for about two months. Danny was now sixteen, a handsome slender boy, in the tenth grade in High School. As all his cousins were girls and as dating among the young is something very uncommon there, he was very much with his girl cousins.

~~Since~~ In the afternoon Aliza came in Athens to see me. She was nearing fourteen and a beauty of <sup>a</sup> little girl. I was very happy to see her. That same evening she was to return to the camp and to her mother. I had not seen them since fifteen months. With a good part of my fortune, just before I left Israel, I bought a swiss wrist watch with a bracelet together, covering of filigree work, all of gold. Aside of the watch, the weight of the gold was sixteen gramm. I sent the watch-bracelet to Martha with Aliza with a note: "Here is sixteen gramm gold for fifteen months of separation and one gramm for interest". May it was too much to say that, but she has still that bracelet-watch and she cherishes it.

Our home was all one very small room and a standing place only to cook on an alcohol cooker. It looked on a backyard and was hear to everything, Synagogue, the traditional streets where Jews ever lived and downtown. I asked two of my sisters to take each one of my sons to sleep there for a few days. As money was a rare thing in our household there and Leon, since three months in town, could not find

anything except very temporary occupations, the boys were rather undernourished. I took care about that.

Wednesday afternoon, two days after I arrived, I went to that camp to see Martha. I did not go earlier first because I was very busy and second I did not want any privileges, as visit afternoons were only on Wednesday and Sunday. We were very glad to see each other.

Very soon I had partial work in three commercial offices in correspondence in foreign languages and started earning something. The money I brought with me was very inadequate for our needs. During that same week I rented a nice two big room apartment, a good kitchen and a wide, covered patio on the clean backyard serving as a dining room. I bought also some more second hand furniture and other needed items. Generally in Greece wages and salaries are low. Martha terminated her work at the camp and received her money. It was a needed addition to my assets.

Months passed and we somehow normalized, but foremost in my mind was what to do with the future of the children, how to enable them to have the education all of them yearned for. Leon wanted to study at a school of Fine Arts in Athens, but when he examined the schedule, he saw no use in it as he already knew more than they taught there and he could learn more alone. The only place for him, he felt, was with one of the main art academies in Europe, but how? Meantime, he landed a very low paying, though very prestigious, job as assistant to the most known and prestigious theatrical painter-arrangeur of Greece. Then he worked for two or three months for an architectural ~~planner~~ in a special project. I was concerned and worried every day with Leon. I knew, he was unhappy being there, no study, no permanent work, no immediate outlook for the future. I believed deeply on that boy and his extraordinary talents. The idea that he would stagnate, depressed me.

In spring of 1957 I had the opportunity to accompany in Europe two importers, in the offices of whom I was employed. Financially it was not very rewarding for me, but I wanted first to get out a little after all those years and then to see if I could do something for Leon. We went by railway to Vienna, Austria



where we remained for three days because it was Easter. I regretted that Johny and Trixie were out of town and I could not see them. I caught them in the phone only one hour before leaving, too late. Then it was Milano, Italy to visit the Fair, from there to Basel, Switzerland, Hannover, Germany and then Francfort.

In that town I had a friend I had not seen for thirteen years, but we had remained in contact by correspondence. He was a German soldier in the air force I met in Athens in 1942 and the only German we befriended. A very tall thin man from Dresden, always good natured, he often came in our home and he was helpful in many cases to us. He did not know we were Jewish though I knew, he was of those few Germans who did not preach extermination and fire. At the end of the war, he knew about our Jewishness. In our years in Israel, we wrote each other regularly and often he invited us to visit them in Germany. He was divorced and finally he transferred to West Germany where he remarried. Now, he was the foreman in a factory making neon lights. His name was Fritz Lempe.

Fritz was very happy to see me and we had a memorable evening at the restaurant of a hotel in Offenbach near Francfort. I put bluntly my problem before Fritz and his charming wife and asked his help. I did not expect much from him. He remarked only: I will see what I can do, Elias. I need a few days. His wife Hilde nodded sympathetically. We went to Holland and returned to Francfort in a week to stay a couple of days before going to Brussels, Belgium. Fritz wanted to see me that same evening at a restaurant in the Kaiserstrasse in Francfort.

There Hilde, who worked as a secretary in a Government office, told me that knowing a little the famous professor Lammeyer of the "Städtische Hochschule fuer Bildende Kuenste", The Town Academy for Formative Arts, tried repeatedly to approach and talk to him and finally succeeded to see him for a few minutes. He was very impatient and told her: Tell the young man to come to Francfort and see me, but, you know, no promises, I have not a single place for a new student in my class this year. Hilde was so hopeful and obstinate as I was. Mr. Sevilla,

she said, go back to Athens and tell the young man to prepare anything he thinks best to show to the professor and send them to me fast. I will fight it out with this professor. He is the only man who can help and he must. He is a good man.

After eight days I was in Athens back and told Leon the story. Within two weeks he worked preparing about a dozen pieces in oil, tempera, watercolor, pencil etc, mainly landscapes and antiquities. I sent them promptly to Mrs. Hilde Lempe in Francfort. It was the beginning of May.

In ten days, I received a detailed report from Hilde. She went to the professor again. He could not recall the previous discussion. He gave her only a few minutes. He was very impatient. He did not ~~see~~ want to see the works of Leon. He only murmured, it is useless, we have no place for any new students this year, tell the young man to come to Francfort. We will see, I cannot do a thing. But Hilde was not the person to be brushed off so easily, as they talked she opened fast the parcel with Leon's work with a sort of forcing the professor to glance at them. He did it furtively, more out of politeness.

Then the miracle, the unbelievable came to pass. He took one painting and ~~and~~ looked at it closely, then a second, a third and a fourth. He put them neatly back on the table. He stood there for a moment. He did not want to see anymore. Then turning to Hilde, he said. <sup>(Gnaedige)</sup> "Gnädige Frau", honorable Lady, tell the young man to be in Francfort. Classes start September fifteen. He will be studying with me. Please, come with me he continued as he stepped to the next room and said to his secretary. We have to register a new student, please do the necessary. ~~This~~ lady here will give you the information about the young man. I am sorry, I have no more time. It is remarkable. Have a good day he added as he exited hastily.

It was the great break. Leon knew about that Academy, one of the best in Germany. We had nearly unsurmountable problems to straighten. One of them was his Greek passport which they did not want to renew before he would have served in the Greek Army for two years. He had the right to come and go from the country if he would dwell only one year in it, because he was "a Greek from abroad", that is li-



ved abroad for ten consecutive years. But Leon was now since fourteen months in Athens and this made him legally liable to military service. The other problem was where to have sufficient funds for the trip, expenses in the first months and tuition which was not very much, but always it was money.

I worked very hard to smooth those problems. I knew, if I don't succeed to it, it would be a disaster, it might ruin the future of Leon. I could turn really only to myself for help and action. It was on a Sunday afternoon in June of 1957 that we accompanied Leon to the railway terminal. When I received his first card from Francfort, I felt immensely alleviated.

He stayed for two or three weeks in the home of Fritz and Hilde. Fritz gave him a job supervising buttons and switches on a huge panel. Meantime he perfected his German. In Israel he had lost all of it and as he re-learned a fluent Greek also in reading and writing, he regained not that much German because we abstained using it very much, at least publicly. Now, he worked on that. In September he started at the Academy and subsequently he became the "protégé" of professor Lammyer. In the meantime, he rented a room near his school. The financial problem for Leon remained acute in various degrees for years to come. I sent him all the money I could regularly which was nearly never enough. I was myself in a very stretched position and often I sent him smaller amounts every week or whenever any money came my way. He worked also part time in anything he could find, from washing bottles of soft drinks to guiding people around town. He stood in school.

In that summer of 1957 again Martha worked in that Jewish children summer camp. It was organized and partly financed by the American Jewish Distribution Committee and was very worthwhile. Children of eight to fourteen or fifteen were there for three weeks each, wholesome food, a healthy environment, very good care. Martha was a kind of den mother there. Sabbath was celebrated and on Sunday afternoon there was some event, a theatrical performance by the children, or dance and song and the like. Aliza taught the children Israeli dances and songs, and sometimes also Daniel went there and did so. I worked now in more commercial offices and I earned a little more. I was restless about the future of Daniel and Aliza.

Daniel <sup>last year</sup> ~~now seventeen~~ was not very happy in the school. He wanted very much to study, but he felt it was not the right education what he received. We discussed it with him. Finally we decided to put him some place to work and that he would study at the night commercial school. ~~Aliza~~ Now, after the first year, he was not very happy, but he agreed to continue there in September. Aliza had difficulties to regain all the Greek she needed and now in school, she was back for two or three grades. She liked also to read much and this kept my hopes that I may be able to do something for her later.

My great task from the first day I returned to Athens was to find out how to emigrate and where. There was always an office of HIAS of New York in Athens, the Jewish International Organization helping people to immigrate in various countries and it was directed by Mrs. Eskenazi whom I knew well because she was the secretary of Mr. Jacobson, the American who first directed the American assistance to the Greek survivors in 1945. She could not help us to emigrate, but she could assist us in many things, if we could have a visa to somewhere. The extraordinary visas number which was granted for the United States was since long exhausted. Though I had priority cards since three years, as the quota for Greece was, we had to wait many more years for our turn to have a visa.

First I went a few times to the American Consulate. The multitudes of people could go only up to the official who dispensed information. In cases like mine, we received the advice that if there is anything for us, we would be informed. Mrs. Eskenazi of the HIAS assured me, she would also follow our matter. It was nothing else I could do. At that time, there were also difficulties in emigrating to Canada, but I also sought information at the Canadian Consulate.

After Leon left in the summer of 1957, we decided that Martha goes to Austria to visit her relatives. She had not seen them since twenty years. I was in Villach, Austria for one day just as I was returning from Belgium to Greece and stopped to see her parents, both in their seventies. The last time I had seen them was over thirty years before. They received me very well. In September of



1957 I put in the train to Austria Martha and Aliza. They would return around end of October, Aliza would register in school a little late, but as matters were, it was not so important. Only an emigration would solve this, as it would solve the education matter of Daniel.

Just after they left, I was again at the American Consulate. A friend knew an employee there of Greek origin and recommended me to him. I saw him and as I expected, he did not give me any hope of an early visa. As I have shown <sup>him</sup> ~~no~~ the four small priority cards with the numbers I had received from the Consulate in 1953, three years before, and looked at them, he was astonished. He looked at me and asked. These cards are three years old. Why have you not had the visa? I did not understand what he meant. He explained. Each country was given a quota of immigration, the quotas were different in number for different countries. Each person was counted not after the country he lived or the present citizenship he held. It was only on the basis of the country of his birth. I see, your wife was born in Austria. As in Austria the emigrants were less in number than the Austrian quota, and your wife is entitled to use the Austrian quota and, of course, to take with her the spouse and their children less than twenty one, you would easily have immigrated to the United States two or five or ten years ago.

I was flabbergasted. What was that again? This was again a big break. How come I did not know, I did not even suspect? What now, I asked? Oh, he said, we will take care of that, I will see, it is perfectly legal, you will be hearing soon from me, that is from the Consulate.

In a couple of months, in November I received various papers from the Consulate and a four pages questionnaire for each one of us, I filled them fast and submitted them to the Consulate. Soon after I was requested to submit quite a series of certificates about us. It was not yet an approval, I was informed, but these documents were needed to process my application. It was a total of nearly twenty five certificates for us all and also needed was ~~needed~~ an Affidavit of Support issued by an American citizen sponsoring us. For the latter, HIAS promised

to ~~try~~ see and provide. Mrs. Eskenazi of the HIAS asked me where I wanted to go in the U.S.A. and if I had relatives there. I said, I had not. She suggested to avoid the very big towns, like New York, Chicago and the like because too many immigrants want to go to them and there is a problem with caring for them.

I told her, she may chose for us or if possible, we would like to go to Minneapolis, Minnesota. The reason was because it was a place we had corresponded for long with someone there we had never met before. It was so. Just after the liberation of Greece, among the American military were a number of Jewish who often were at the Synagogue for services or for our assistance. One of them married to a local Jewish girl and I got acquainted with him. He had asked me to write something for an American Jewish paper which I did. Later, I was requested to write small articles about the German occupation time in Greece, which I did. Once I received a \$20.00 check from one of those papers. I wrote them that money was at that time not of much help to us. What we needed was some foodstuffs, clothing for the children and I needed books which I named. They were on history of the Jewish dispersion throughout the centuries, in which I was interested and I did not know where to have from.

I wrote in all half a dozen of small articles and I received much more assistance parcels than that as well as books, from various States and persons we did not know. And then happened this. In 1946, that is much later than my articles, I received a parcel with nice clothing for a little girl and something more from Minneapolis, Minnesota. Usually, I was sending a warm thank-you letter to every sender of such a parcel. The majority of them never wrote to me back. But on this parcel there was no sender's name and I did not know whom to thank. Then, on a small girl's blouse, a small piece of paper was pinned with a name and address which I thought to be the sender. So I sat down and penned a nice letter.

In a few weeks I received a reply. It was from a Mrs. Larson who wrote us that they have never sent us a parcel, but they intend to send us one very soon. She observed that she had donated that little shirt last year, as she remembers,



to a neighborhood Bazaar. She did not know who bought or won it. Mrs. Larson had two daughters unmarried home and her husband was a retired engineer of the City of Minneapolis. He wrote us too and asked me to write him certain things about Greece. They said, they were Catholics, not Jewish, but it did not make any difference for them. For twelve years we were corresponding. They remembered the birthdays of my children and especially the two younger ones and sent them very nice things and in all the holidays. This is the reason I told Mrs. Eskenazi that we would be glad to go to that town if possible. It was one we heard so much of.

In January 1958 finally I was able to gather all the many certificates in duplicate and submit them to the U.S. Consulate. I was told that we will be ~~in~~ contacted as soon as it would be so far. By now, to save money, I lived with Daniel in a small one room and kitchen apartment. He was working in a central store of cameras and related material of a good friend of mine as apprentice. He did not earn enough, but he was in good hands. As the news came from the Consulate after Martha and Aliza had left, we decided that they will stay longer with her family in Austria. Leon was doing well with his studies in Frankfurt though his life was difficult because of lack of enough funds.

In March, I had again the opportunity of accompanying someone to Fairs in various towns of Europe. I left Daniel alone in Athens because someone should be there if anything from the Consulate for us came. I knew of a family living in the town of Nuerenberg. Three weeks before leaving Greece, I sent money to Martha in Austria and I asked her to go immediately to Leon in Germany. He was living now in a small two room apartment in Offenbach, near Frankfurt. They did and they were for nearly three weeks all together there. Then, I made an appointment with Martha and Aliza in the house of my friends in Nuerenberg at a certain day and when I arrived they were already there. I had not seen them since six months. We were only one day together. I sent them to Villach, Austria and then they continued to Athens, to join Daniel. I went to Frankfurt, to Leon.

I went to visit the Trade Fair of Leipzig, Eastern Germany, where for the first time I saw Russian officers and other military. Then I was in several other

towns and returned to Francfort. I was there again three days. I was very happy to see Leon and how he was fulfilling his ardent wish to perfect himself in something he liked. But my new meeting with Fritz and Hilde was extremely cordial. I felt so grateful to them. What they did was priceless for us.

I returned to Athens and as the months passed, I became more and more restless. The small apartment we had was totally unadequate for four persons, only one somewhat spacy room in a very noisy street, just very near to the main wholesale vegetable market of the town, dust, flies and filth. We did not want to rent another more costly apartment because we hoped every day to have the magic word from the American Consulate. That summer too, Martha went for work to the children camp and most of the time Aliza was with her.

My other family was alright. Errico, recovered from the hardships in Auschwitz concentration camp, though always weak, had a small workshop making leather articles together with our brother Moshe, but as profits were meager, Moshe started a peddling business in leather articles on instalment basis. Rosa had acquired a small knitting machine and was making sweaters in her home which she peddled to the shops on wholesale or received some private orders, though her profits were just to keep her over water. She lived in our paternal house with Pinhas, who was still unmarried at the age of fifty nine. He always had our small father's shop repairing umbrellas, when it rained. He cooked his lunch on a coal contraption in his shop and evening Rosa took care home for his dinner. Now, the paternal house was owned only by Rosa and Victoria, but a good part of it was rundown. A very old building.

The one who was in the best financial position was ~~four~~ youngest sister Leah. Marc Mevorah, her husband, lost his entire family during the war, exterminated by the Germans and he was very devoted to us. He created a flourishing welding business and everything was administered by Leah. She bought a very valuable building to live and other property, for many years up to now helped materially in virtually everyone in any need in our family and she did it generously. She has



never missed a single opportunity of doing it, for any reason whatsoever. Our family was always together, held to each other and never were any such quarrels to break relations to or from anyone. A rare thing for nine brothers and sisters. In all my travels, I always remained in closed contact with all and each one of them and vice versa.

Now, we were aging. Pinhas and Moshe had diabetes since a few years and Moshe bought always a quantity of insulin tablets and providing also Pinhas at no cost for the latter. Errico had something like asthma and Rosa had arthritis bothering her with her knitting work at the machine. Victoria, harassed with the acute problems of life, caring very much for her three daughters, had a beginning of heart condition and her obesity was not helpful at all. Esther had lost her husband. He was killed years back when he served in the army. He was driving a truck at the "front" where leftists and rightists were fighting, when ambushed and killed. Esther or Steroula as we always called her, never recovered from this blow and up to day never remarried. Rina (Sara) our sister, lost her husband David in the crematoriums of Auschwitz and a couple of years later she married his brother Albert, a successful taylor in Athens. He was a widow with a daughter. This marriage was frequently in the Jewish religion. The brother of a deceased man, if unmarried, has to marry the widow of his brother to protect her and her offspring.

The magic word arrived a morning in September 1958. It was a double luck. At the American Consulate finally they told me that a permanent visa was granted to us from Washington. At the HIAS office Mrs. Eskenazi informed me that the Affidavit of Support finally arrived from New York. It took one year and it was for Minneapolis, Minnesota, issued by the Jewish Family Service of that town. It was electrifying to us. I received papers from the Consulate for thorough medical examinations of all of us, which we hastened to make. The HIAS sent us to I.C.E.M. the International Committee for European Migrations, a United Nations organization helping people to emigrate, non-denominational. They assisted us with passports and secured for us a place in a chartered plane. This time in the American Con-

sulate we spend nearly an entire morning. They took our fingerprints, we signed several times various papers. Finally, we went to the office of the vice consul, we were sworn and he wished us good luck.

It was before the end of September and we were told that our quota was for October and that the documents would be handed to us at the beginning of that month. They were, a big sealed envelope with a lot of documents inside, which we would have to hand to the immigration official in New York to be admitted. The I.C.E.M. informed us that our plane would leave Athens on October twenty seven. We had very few possessions and my savings were non-existent for many reasons, one of which was to keep Leon on his feet and study in Germany. At the last day, when all my sisters arrived in our home, I delivered to Leah the key and told her to distribute our belongings among our people, that is our little kitchenware, linen and the like. I would not take in America our few dishes. The previous evening all the relatives gathered at Leah's home to bid us farewell. A few days before we were asked and we delivered all our belongings we wanted to take, in two wooden crates, around one hundred pounds, mostly books and different very personal things to each one of us.

My sisters were at the airport that evening with us. We knew that the plane was coming from Istanbul, and it delayed by two hours. It was windy and late, about ten P.M. We did not know much about the plane, the way it will go or the time we would arrive. The plane was a turboprop with two motors, looked very small and very rundown from outside. Inside it was too. We were about ninety people and there was not a small bit of space without seats. I saw the letters AIA and the stewardess told me, they represent the American International Airlines, a name I had never heard before. It looked inside very poor and even the lighting was very dim. It was crammed with two rows of seats, two on each side and in between a narrow corridor, just for one person to walk.

The passengers were an interesting crowd. All of them were some kind of refugees <sup>except</sup> ~~except~~ my family. Albanians, Yugoslavs and Bulgarians who some time they



escaped from their countries and given asylum in Greece. There were also refugees from Egypt of Greek origin. There was the only Jewish family among the latter, a couple with an only ten year old son. Before boarding the plane, a few children were brought to be delivered in New York and a baby of a few months old was entrusted to Martha. They were adopted children by Greek-American families.

Finally the plane gained height into the darkness of the night and nobody knew to where. Into the small plane there was not a single seat empty. The only ~~steward~~ stewardess, a tall American girl, told me that the other stewardess got sick in Istanbul and she was alone there for ninety people. She did not seem to have much to do with us. It was about three Pm the morning when our plane landed in the midst of an apparently empty huge airport and we were asked to leave it and go by foot to the nearby huge waiting room, deserted and also dimly lighted. I learned that this was the Fiumicino Airport in Rome.

We waited there for hours and nobody was around to give us the least information about anything. A big kiosk was there with a woman selling newspapers, candy and the like. I bought a couple of cards to send to people ~~of~~ our family in Greece. It was a little after six o'clock when we were ordered back into the plane. There was now a second stewardess, a plump Italian girl speaking fluently English. She told me, she was with a domestic airline, it was the first time she was going to America and she hoped they would hire her for overseas flights. The baby constantly on the lap of Martha was restless. The stewardess warmed the milk to feed the little boy. The Italian stewardess did not know where the next stop, even when we might reach New York.

For several hours the plane was flying into the cloudy sky shaking badly and sometimes falling into empty air pockets to a point that you thought, this is the end of the world. Each time, most of the people made the sign of cross on their chests and some of them prayed loudly. There were no luxuries there, no belts, no announcements, no lifesaving equipment, no cocktails and even no food. Some time in the morning each one of us received a small sandwich and a little

paper cup with black coffee and sugar. The plastic spoons had on them the letters EL AL of the Israeli airline. The cheese sandwiches were made hastily on the plane. A cargo plane in which seats were put hastily.

The weather was apparently bad. Around noon or a little after, the plane landed in a smaller nearly totally empty airport and we again were ordered out to the nearby waiting hall, by far smaller than in Rome. The Italian girl did not know where we were. I did not see any slate, any "Welcome". As all our humanity was into the warm new built hall with the tall glass windows, I learned that this is Prestwick in Scotland. It surprised me greatly because I speculated firmly that we were heading for Portugal ~~on~~ some island there, for the great leap over the ocean. Who had ever heard about an airport in a Prestwick, Scotland?

It was chilly, a thin rain drizzling from the ~~dark~~<sup>gray</sup> cloudy ~~sky~~<sup>sky</sup>, no movement in this airport. All my money was thirty eight Dollars and Danny had an other twenty Dollars his boss gave him at the last moment. I had changed one Dollar in Rome for the cards and the stamps. Now, I changed an other Dollar to buy some chocolate for my children. Time passed and we were alone, no agents, no flying personnel to let us know anything. It was about three in the afternoon when I caught our pilot passing for a moment. I was the only passenger perhaps speaking English. When I asked him he answered evasively. Bad weather he said, I don't know, soon, we are waiting. The Italian girl helped again to warm the milk of the baby who was sleeping on a ~~seat~~<sup>seat</sup> wrapped in his blankets.

Just next to that waiting hall was a fine looking restaurant entirely empty, the tables invitingly decorated with all the trimmings, white cloths, a flower vase in the middle and everything else. The door from our hall was closed to it. Finally, around five 'oclock it opened and we were invited in and filled all of it in a jiffy. They served us a fine meal though sufficient for people less hungry than we were. Something is better than nothing.

Again hours passed and it was deep dark, about eight o'clock that we were told we may board our home, I mean plane. We did that very hopefully and soon



we were among the ~~darkened~~ <sup>thick</sup> clouds. This time, I was sure, next landing would be in New York. I knew where is Scotland. Everyone was saying around, in a few hours the adventure would be out. It was not.

I had so much time in my hands. I tried to read the Italian paper a had bought in Rome, but the lighting was very faint. Most of the passengers were sleeping. I thought about my father and his eternal longing to come to America fifty years before. If he would only have done it, taking his wife and her mother and any children they had at that time, I might be now a successful man in America, may be a doctor or a businessman and I would not be now in this crowded small plane with all those people. I was now nearing fifty three and I had heard much about the American dream. But I was optimistic, I knew I will make it, because I must make it.

We were only three or four hours in the air when we landed into a darkened small airport. I thought, this cannot be New York. Our humanity was emptied out and we went about one hundred yards in the cold and then into the warm waiting hall. I was greatly astonished to hear, this is Reykiavik, Island. Were we still so far from New York.<sup>2</sup> For Martha the hardship was still greater with the baby nearly all the time on her lap. She took very good care of that little boy with the blond complexion, but it was a burden for her she took willingly.

In that airport I changed an other Dollar for two post cards and chocolate at the only open place, the newsstand. We did remain long, only an hour or so. Everyone was glad to be again in the air. I was sure, this time it will be New York. It could not be otherwise, impossible.

It was still dark in the pre-dawn when we suddenly descended and landed in a small airport. We were very disappointed. It could not be New York and it was not. It was cold as we went to the not so big warm waiting hall and there I learned that we were in Gander, ~~Newfoundland, the "Terra Nova" of the "Gangrista"~~ ~~doran~~ New Scotland or "Nova Scotia", in Canada. I changed an other Dollar for two postcards and chocolate. Again in an hour or so, as a pale sunshine covered

everything, we boarded that <sup>plane</sup> ~~plane~~, since nearly thirty hours our home and our hope. I thought, this time I will have not to change any other Dollar for chocolate. The American stewardess, when I asked her how many more airports we have to visit, she assured me smiling. This is the last, this is New York.

It was. The plane people were all very tired and in a festive mood. The weather was sunny and warm and the sky clear. It was early afternoon when we were over New York. Only a glance through a window down that sunny day and you knew it was New York. No doubt.

We landed before a big building but we could not get out. Next to us a big plane with high personalities was surrounded by a lot of people with cameras and police. We had to wait for them to clear out. Then in a huge waiting hall. A girl wanted to know who are the folks coming through HIAS and handed to us and to the other Jewish family huge pin buttons with the word HIAS to put on our lapels. We delivered the baby to Miss Jane Russel, the actress and someone gave to Martha a five Dollar bill for the trouble. We were getting already richer. It was the first money my family was earning in America.

Our turn came and we handed the sealed big envelope with the documents to an official in the cubicle who opened it. A very polite young man, constantly smiling, he examined fast the documents, returned to us a few of the papers and directed us to an other cubicle nearby. He told us, welcome to America and handed me a small leaflet, the best I ever read. It was there: You are an American citizen now under probation, if you have any difficulty, question or problem, don't hesitate to apply to us, and the like. In the next cubicle where we delivered the rest of the documents, the procedure took a couple of minutes. We were again told, welcome in America. Heartwarming.

Into the immense waiting hall with our few luggage, a man in his forties approached us and I saw the same button HIAS on his lapel. You are certainly Mr. Sevilla, he said. I will put you now on the airline bus which will drive you to the Penn Central Railway. I will be there before you are. Welcome to America, Mr. Sevilla. Everything will be alright. America the Beautiful.



THE LAND OF OPPORTUNITIES

The HIAS man was at the huge railway station. He asked me if I have any money. I told him, I have thirty four Dollars. He bought for us four tickets to ~~Chicago~~ <sup>Minneapolis</sup> and he said, a HIAS man will be waiting for us as we will arrive there. He delivered our luggage to a porter for our train leaving after half an hour. He asked us if we are hungry and brought us sandwiches and soft drinks from a vending machine somewhere there. About six P.M. we were well installed in our train and were glad when it started rolling. We had very comfortable spacious seats, a luxury against what we had in the plane. I went to the sitting room - wagon where people read papers and had drinks. After a while I returned to our place. Martha and the children were soundly asleep. I went to sleep too. We needed that.

It was before nine o'clock when our train entered the giant railway station in Chicago. In fact, a HIAS man was already ~~there~~. The other Jewish family from Egypt was sponsored for Chicago and would remain in that town. The HIAS man brought us to the station cafeteria for breakfast. I had cereal, the first time ever I ate that. About ten thirty we boarded the train to Minneapolis. The HIAS man gave me the tickets and assured us that someone will wait for us at destination. At noon I bought something for Martha and the children to eat at the train buffet. I was too tired and too excited for eating. We sat with Daniel at the Vista dome looking at the prairies and the vast empty spaces we passed to my amazement.

It was already after dusk when we arrived at the terminal depot in Minneapolis. We went out of the very long train and we did not see anyone waiting. All the passengers went the long way to the waiting room and the exit and we were there alone in the half darkness. I did not know what to do. In the train I was acquainted with a gentleman who told me he was a salesman. He was kind enough to stay back with us waiting and when nobody was there, he told me to leave my people and our luggage and to go with him at the waiting room to see if someone was there for us or to call someone in the phone for us. At the waiting room were two gentlemen and my friend asked them. Yes, the one said, he is from the HIAS and he waited us to come out.

We went in the depot to my people. The one of the gentlemen told me that his name was Mr. Rackner and the other was a photographer for a local Jewish newspaper, a weekly, and wanted to photograph us and write a small feature because we were the first refugee family coming in town. <sup>After</sup> ~~After~~ that we went all outside, the photographer excused himself and Mr. Rackner put all our luggage in his car and drove us to a restaurant to eat. I could not eat anything. I remember, we ordered fried chicken for Martha and the children. Then Mr. Rackner drove us to a beautiful main street in North Minneapolis and stopped before a nice house with four apartments. We went upstairs from a separate entrance on the street, he had the key and opened it. It was furnished, not richly, but adequately. An immense apartment appeared to be, two bedrooms, a very big dinning room, a living room, a den, a spacy patio covered looking to the street, a very big kitchen, a back door and patio. Something we could not dream of.

Mr. Rackner said, this is the home we rented for you. There is here one towel, soap, beds, bedspreads, blankets for everyone. To morrow morning at eight I will be here. Rest well and have a good night. This was a palace in proportion to the one single room we lived just two days before. It was something. As I was on the patio, a man standing on the street down asked me if I need anything. He said, he lived just downstairs and asked if he may come to us. We became friends. He was a Jewish man working with cars, I think a mechanic. He explained to me that this was a Jewish neighborhood, thousands of Jews lived there, many Synagbues and Jewish shops. It seemed, we were in good hands. We were content and slept well.

In the morning Mr. Rackner came with his car and took us downtown to the hotel Normandie for breakfast. Then we went to the nearby building of the Family Service to his office. There he told me not to worry about anything. In the last months of the year ahead of us, it was not easy to find work for us but ~~they~~ <sup>they will</sup> care up to the time we have work and become self-sufficient. He made a calculation that I would need then thirty two dollars a week for groceries and incidentals. Rent and utilities would be cared of by his office. On every monday I should come there and receive a check. I should be careful to buy only first need articles.



He acquainted us with Mr. Irving Nudell who managed the employment office of the agency, a fine gentleman who took some information about us. Then Mr. Rackner brought us to a couple of department stores, one of which was Woolworth. He bought a number of things for our household and let Martha chose some for the kitchen. It was only the elementary, one small, one big and one soup dish for each one of us, one spoon, one fork and one knife for each one and so on and so forth. He said, we provide you with first help. You will earn by yourself and you will have what you want, I believe soon. He gave me a check of \$35.00 and although it was thursday, he told me to come next monday for the regular weekly check. Mr. Rackner was always good to us and he ~~tried~~ treated us in a very dignified manner. He brought <sup>us</sup> back to our home. He told me, he wanted me to go often down town by foot to familiarize myself with streets and people. He has shown us the nearest supermarket, a couple of blocks from our home and urged me to go there to buy our first supplies.

I did so, together with Daniel. We bought things to start a household, rice, noodles, salt, bread, oil, vinegar, some fruit and vegetables and the like, for about ten Dollars. We were in business. It was October thirty one. I wrote a long letter to our family in Athens reporting. The same afternoon a man in his late thirties came to us. He spoke Greek, he was from Thessaloniki, a survivor from Ausschwitz, he emigrated from Germany after liberation to America, already an American citizen, married with two young children, he invited us home and told us that he would be helpful to us if we need anything in town. A couple of days <sup>later</sup> the second Greek Jewish man in town from Thessaloniki, came to see us. Also he was a survivor of Auschwitz, his wife a Rumanian survivor too, five boys age three to fifteen. He also invited us in his home. Now, we had a few friends. But we had to see yet our biggest friend, our long time correspondent, Mrs. Larson and her two daughters. We had exchanged so many times pictures.

Next day I called Mrs. Larson. Our phone was not connected and Mr. Rackner said, we don't need it yet. Mrs. Larson was happy we were there. It was saturday and we arranged next afternoon to go to them. She wanted to send her daughter

with the car to pick us up. I told her not to do it and we will try to come by bus to learn a little going around. They lived far enough, in South Minneapolis, at the lake Nokomis, about half an hour driving from us. We had to change twice bus, but we found our way.

They were delighted to see us like old friends we were. A distinguished husky lady in her mid sixties, all white haired, her daughter Ruth with her husband, no children and her younger daughter Shirley unmarried though ~~about~~ in her mid-thirties, all of them living together in a very pretty one family house arranged with much taste. We had dinner with them and a fine evening. Our problem was that I was the only one there able to communicate in English, but we managed cordially well.

Late evening after ten o'clock, all of us eight persons in their station wagon had driven to North Minneapolis, to our home. They had loaded in the back three or four carton boxes for us. We had no idea what was there and when they left us, we opened them, we were agreeably amazed. We found an abundance of linen, bed spreads, some blankets, towels, curtains, kitchenware and dishes, a collection of spices and other things, most of them second hand though in very good condition and extremely useful. It was as if they emptied their attic or more than one attics to gather all that. There was even a very old radio set still well working.

We received also some additional used furniture and a few other things through the Family Service from anonymous donors. Among it was a manually working washing machine, very useful. In our kitchen there was a good stove and a fine used refrigerator, the first time in our life we had such appliances. On Thanksgiving eve, someone rang our door and as Martha went down, there were two boxes with an enormous Turkey, much vegetable and food and a number of cans. Who could eat a twenty pound turkey and we did not know what to do with the cans of cranberry. I called Mr. Rackner to thank him. He said, he did not send us any turkey, he thinks, ~~he~~ knows who must have donated it and better not to know. In the coming years, he added, it is expected that your children at least will acquire a



better social position that they have now and knowing who helped whom in such circumstances, it may be a source of embarrassment. I will thank the man for you.

When we arrived in Minneapolis, the weather was agreeable like in the Fall. I was warned that Minnesota is the coldest State in the Union and winters were long and unbearably cold. We had nearly no winter clothing. By mid November, the weather became colder. A morning Mr. Rackner brought us to a factory and let us have two very heavy overcoats with artificial fur collars for me and Danny, very warm keeping in any weather. For Martha and Aliza coats were acquired from an other outlet. Then we had heavier boots and some other winter clothing. It was very much needed a little later when the cold was below zero and continued so for periods of time.

Now, what worried me was that we had no work yet. I explained to Mr. Rackner, I did not like to receive every week a charity check and each time he wanted me not to worry. Mr. Irving Nudell also was telling me that I should be patient, that December and January were not good months for employment and the like. I felt also that the real problem was our age. I was fifty three and Martha forty nine. In a town like Minneapolis, into the youth oriented society of this country, newcomers with no specialization and particular skill in something, a trade or service, it was a real handicap. Mr. Nudell used to read the ads in the newspaper, to send me to various places to ask and gave me the busfare. Usually and invariably <sup>with</sup> I returning with no result. Don't contact us, we will contact you.

I decided to fight it myself and on my own. In the first place we found nearby a Jewish orphanage not far from our house where a cook was needed. One of our two Greek-Jewish friends had recommended it to us. It was a strange institution for our old country standards as it had more personnel than children. People or the Family Service, left there temporarily children in age of five to fifteen, whose mother was in the hospital or out of town pursuing her husband who had left her and problems like that. The turnover at the orphanage or "Jewish Children home" as they called it, was very frequent. A huge corner two stories residence

with a big back yard-garden walled and fenced, some auxiliary structures in it. Martha had to cook more for the personnel than for the children.

The pay was meager and the work was plenty for Martha. It~~x~~ was hundred twenty dollars a month before taxes. This job had the big advantage that as it was cooked more than it could consumed, often she was bringing to our home food which otherwise would have to be thrown out and this was very valuable to us at that time. Anyway, it was the second time that the first money earned in the family, it was by Martha.

My high priority problem was with education. Daniel was eighteen and a half, he had less two years from High School graduation and he did not know English. I wanted him to be in school and to stay there, but how? Aside of the lack of funds, there were the other difficulties seeming unsurmountable. With Aliza it could be easier as she was sixteen. Anyway, the first thing on the agenda was for them to learn English, fast. In our neighborhood, at the High School building, twice a week there were English courses for newcomers. We immediately enrolled Daniel, Aliza and Martha. The two children made speedy progress.

Mr. Rackner told me, it was possible to ~~enroll~~ register Aliza in High School in the second half of the year, in January. He went to the counsellor of the school and made the arrangement. Her English was not sufficient, but with some extra work and help, she would cope with. After she enrolled in the months ahead, she got such help by students she befriended and especially a negro girl who got out of her way to help. For Danny, he could only register in High School at the beginning of the School year because he was over eighteen, which was a big problem.

To accelerate the knowledge of the language for the children and make for them friends, we decided with Mr. Rackner to introduce them to the Jewish youth Group "Habonim" (means the builders). Most of the young people there spoke Hebrew more or less well, some of them had already visited Israel. Daniel and Aliza knew fluently Hebrew and also well Israeli dances and songs, a valuable thing for the group because they often organized Israeli evenings with dance and song.



They taught them. Soon many young boys and girls were coming to our home. One of them was very particular for Aliza, but on it a little later.

We were nearly six weeks there and I could not find work. May be I would after an other six weeks, after the holidays, as they were telling me, but I was restless. I knew that my problem will remain the same, aged and no skill in a trade, especially the former.

I would try it myself instead of going around on ads Mr. Nudell was cutting<sup>out</sup> of the newspaper. I was looking at the newspaper for names and addresses of companies and shops and was going around searching for such. I would enter ~~to~~ a company if I liked the exterior, a kind of hunch or intuition. I would say to the receptionist that I wanted to see the president. She would look at me startled and ask as to whether I had an appointment. I would answer no. Sometimes she would ask for the purpose of my visit. If I told her or avoided to tell her, it was just the same. She would send me to the personnel or simply dismiss me. If at the personnel office, the man would listen to me politely and then, it was, don't call us, we will call you. Much later I understood that this was the most naive way to obtain a job, but finally with me it worked.

After a dozen or more of trial and dismissal, I came to a Company not very far from my home. Mr. Nudell had shown amusement when I told him what I was trying and said that I would never have a job like that. Now, it was more of the same with this receptionist. From her office I saw the huge hall with about fifty desks in it and people working, a series of closed glass walled offices at the sides with other people working at desks and people moving up and down. A very distinguished setting, like at a Bank. The receptionist, busy with something, looked annoyed with my presence.

Just then a tall, trim and elegantly dressed gentleman came from outside and wanted to say something to the receptionist while I was asking to see the president. He turned and asked me what I want. I repeated, to talk to the president. It's alright he said, talk to me, I am the vice-president. What do you want?

I summoned all my courage. I just arrived from Europe, I said, I will propose that you give me a job because you have dealings with Europe and I know Europe well and first hand. He looked at me for a moment amused and invited me to sit with ~~me~~<sup>him</sup> at the lobby there. I continued, up to a few weeks ago, I was working with several import houses in Europe. I was making ~~there~~<sup>ings</sup> correspondence in foreign languages and such addressed to companies in the United States. There were constantly misunderstand~~s~~<sup>ings</sup>, sometimes costly. I was at the receiving end of the American correspondence and I can tell you why we could not understand you and you could <sup>not</sup> understand us.

It was strong language from my part, but it impressed him. He stood up and said. Come with me. In his luxurious office, he was very friendly and polite. He told me that his own father had immigrated from Rumania as a very young man. He sympathized with me, but he was for domestic affairs. His brother, the president, who should discuss my hiring, was in Europe, just now in Turkey. He will be back in ten days, I will tell him. I said: Don't call us, we will call you. It is that I hear all the time. He laughed loudly. No, no, he exclaimed, it is not the same. I promise, I will contact you, write down your address and telephone number. I have no telephone I said, as I was noting my address down. Never mind, we will send someone to you. Thank you, good bye.

It was that by mid-December. I<sup>n</sup> continued visiting companies with no success. I wanted to persevere and I knew someone would give me a job somewhere. If I could not have one in ~~some~~<sup>an</sup> office, I would end at some factory doing a lowly menial work for little pay. I tried because I had nothing to lose.

On December twenty seven, a saturday, in the forenoon, a man came to our home and told me, the president of NAPCO wanted to see me. I went with him. The president, a kindly tall portly man, talked with me for a while. He told me, he <sup>had</sup> no position in mind for me, but if I come back monday afternoon at four, he may think about it and tell me. He is not sure he can use me. Then, as it was noon, he brought me to my home in his car.



On monday afternoon I was there. The receptionist recognized me and was astonished to hear me again wanting to see the president. I said, I have an appointment. Unbelievably<sup>e</sup> called the secretary of the president in the phone. I had to wait there a little because someone was in the president's office. I saw for a moment the vice president passing. He nodded and smiled friendly at me.

I had told Mr.Nudell of the Family Service about my efforts at NAPCO and that same monday morning I phoned him to tell that I had an appointment with the president in the afternoon. Mr.Nudell was very pessimistic. He said, he had sent <sup>people</sup> in the past to that company for hiring and never one was taken. He was sure my chances to receive a job with them were extremely low, but he wished me good luck.

The president was friendly and brief. He told me, he did not yet know what to do with me, but something would be done. He would take me, but he could not offer me more than \$250.00 a month. I replied, that if he would offer me even hundred twenty five a month, I would accept. Since two months I am running around and everyone tells me, don't call us, we will call you. He smiled. It's alright, he said, you sound like my late father used to talk. He called his secretary and told her to arrange with Greenberg, the personnel manager, to take care. Next morning, Mr.Greenberg, who was the same man who came in my home to take me last saturday, gave me a nice desk in the big hall and all what I wanted. Only he did not tell me what to do. He did not hire me, The president did.

I called Mr.Nudell to tell ~~that~~. He was highly impressed. He said, may be we will send them someone else for work. I asked him not to do it so fast. As a matter of fact it proved to be the beginning with me, because in the two or three years to come, they hired a series of middleaged Jewish newcomers like me and it became a kind of tradition. Later even I was the one who introduced them and obtained work for them in that same company.

Mr.Rackner was happy we were becoming self-sufficient in so little time. Other newcomers in our age bracket were becoming dependent for many months. At

the beginning of January, a few days after I started working, he came <sup>at</sup> the company, we sat in the lobby and he explained to me, they will care of our bills and rent that month and assured me, they are concerned about us and whenever in need or something they will be ready to assist and the like. I was happy, we were in a position to earn our living and cease receiving charity. I thanked Mr. Rackner very much.

Our earnings were not ample, though enough if handled with care, which we did. Aliza started going to school. Daniel in February had a simple job in a factory producing nuts and bolts while he worked hard in learning English. But my main concern was with Leon in Germany. From the very starting of our coming in America, I started sending him small amounts of money trimming it from the checks I was receiving weekly from Mr. Rackner who was opposed of any help I was giving to our son. He said, they were responsible for us there and if our son would be also in Minneapolis, they would assist him. For Leon studying in an other country, they had no funds. I cut out everything I could that I send to Leon something as often as possible. Now, we had to sustain him a little better though in any case we could not send him enough. He was very happy we finally succeeded to immigrate and he had great faith upon us as we had upon him.

We were often at Mrs. Larson's house, at least once weekly and they did things for us. Sometimes we went to the houses of the two other Jewish Greeks ~~from~~ from Thessaloniki, but not as often as it could be because they were not very compatible to us. In both these houses there was no book and no daily newspaper. They had all their information about everyday life from sitting innumerable hours starring at the T.V. set. I thought constantly how we could create a worthwhile future and I went to great lengths to it. I was asking all kinds of questions and gathering as much information as I could.

In the cold evenings we sat in our heated apartment reading and discussing most the time, mostly I with Martha because often the children were with their newly acquired friends. I bought a second hand T.V. set for forty dollars



We did not watch very much. I was writing letters to family and friends. An evening I had the idea to make a future plan, something like a five year plan. As circumstances were, it was much imagination and wishful thinking. I was determined to try my best and beyond it, to achieve something better. When in the next days I talked about it to my two Jewish friends from Greece, they shook their heads and said that I am crazy.

Both of them declared, I should forget about high education and other highly ambitious plans. Put your teenagers to work. Bring also the one from Germany and put him to work. You and your wife work. <sup>Buy</sup> ~~by~~ a house with instalment payments. In five or ten years you will have made it well. My answer was that we will make it otherwise and that my way was better. They were unconvinced. They were convinced alright years later when we succeeded better than I even predicted.

Spring came with all its hope. I kept repeating to myself, now or never. It is the last time in my life that I have to try. We had now a little more money and we slowly bought a few very needed things and I could send a little more assistance to Leon. I discovered that at the Salvation Army store you could buy clothing, especially for men, for very little money. I was often there and I bought not only for me and sometimes for Danny, but also suits and the like which I sent to Greece to Pinhas and others. Minneapolis is a beautiful town in summer with the many lakes and parks. We felt well.

Daniel had to start school in September. He was excited about it. In June he quit with the factory of nuts and bolts and went to work in a Jewish Children camp for the summer in Wisconsin. The pay was not great, but this work would help him to familiarize still better with English. Aliza was speaking now fluently English though not entirely correctly. Martha was still at that orphanage kitchen job, not very happy there. I was searching ~~around~~ in my mind for something else, different, better for her. Leon wanted now to transfer his studies in Vienna on the suggestion of professor Lammeyer and asked my opinion. It would be a burden for our fragile economics, but I considered it.

It was 1959. We made the acquaintance of a couple from Hungary in the neighborhood, in their late forties, no children. They were in America only a few years. He was a cook in a big hotel, she was working in a small factory making winter hats and she was bored. She decided to go to a Beauty School and be a beautician come, which was rather too late. There we had the idea that Martha quits from the orphanage kitchen and goes also in that school. Normally it was absurd and unreasonable to <sup>do</sup> that, but we were in the mood of jumping. First we would lose her small salary and on top of that the cooked food she often brought home, a useful addition. Second, the school would cost forty dollars a month for tuition, plus daily busfare. Third Martha did not know sufficiently English and it was badly needed. Fourth it was working and studying forty eight hours, six days a week and do also homework, fifteen hundred hours or eight or nine months. Her age, nearing fifty, was not the most fitting and so on and so fourth.

We jumped. Now I remained with my small salary, Daniel in School, Martha in school, everyone in school and only I working to sustain four people going to school. From the beginning and always after, as long as anyone earned a dollar, that dollar came in my hands, no strings attached. The girl earning a single dollar from babysitting, it was deposited in my hand. I had not to ask for it. It was done unconditionally. The problem was that nobody earned anything except me. I was always earning the same, two hundred fifty a month, before taxes. I was very hardpressed for money. I made overtime, even if there was not much need for it, sometimes up to fifteen hours a week, which was paid one and a half times. This relieved but not saved the situation.

At NAPCO, the company I worked, I could not make any progress. After a few days the president so much absorbed with other things, forgot about me and when he saw me, he sometimes asked me how I am doing. I had problems with adapting. As I did belong to the president, I was without a supervisor who would give me a certain work and nobody was really interested or ~~asked~~ asked me what I was doing. If I would be younger, I would quit, but I knew, I would have again to



run around trying to meet presidents and hear every place, don't call us, we will call ~~you~~. The president often was out of town and I was there, at my desk, in the middle of the beehive, an isolated and insulated island, everyone polite and distant. To be working at something, or give the impression to, I was taking various files from the file room and reading them entirely. Finally, I submitted a compiled memo to the president with suggestions. He found it alright, called a couple of department managers who found it rather reactionary to their ideas and so I started to make enemies. I learned to stop making suggestions and writing such memos. In other circumstances I would have been fired on the spot. Here I was untouchable, the man of the president.

As everything has finally its solution, so my problem had ~~his~~ its one. A morning, I was called at the office of the export sales manager. I was asked if I know well French. They had a gentleman there from Belgium and had difficulties in communicating because his English was failing and their French was much wanting. My fluent French was well in place there. At noon I sat with them over lunch. The export sales manager started again saying good morning to me when we met. Then an other day, someone brought to me a two page letter from the department of Defense of Argentina, written in a very haughty Spanish and asked me if I can translate it. Of course, I could, with the help of a good dictionary for the technical expressions. Usually, they were sending such documents for translation to people outside which meant having it after two or three days. Slowly I became the man for languages. At least, I was somebody there.

The majority of the company's clients were foreign governments. They exported mainly spare parts for all kinds of military vehicles the Americans had left or granted to a great number of foreign countries, from Germany to Peru and especially tanks. These vehicles were now mostly obsolete and no more produced, but they had to be serviced to keep them functioning. The company acquired the parts either from constantly auctioned surplusses or produced them in its own huge workshop on base of specifications in the government manuals and on parti-

cular licencing and supervision. They had a separate huge building to store all the available parts in thousands of ~~be~~ bins and there were hundreds of thousands of inventory cards. A well organized enterprise with about one thousand people.

When I lost the income from Martha and Daniel, both going to school that September of 1959, I had to have a raise of my salary, which I was sure I deserved, but to whom to go? The president was now distant though always smiling at me when meeting, sometimes at the cafeteria. Again, a solution was found here. The son of the president, in his early twenties, just graduated from a prestigious college in the East, ~~and~~ was now all the time around apprenticing with his father. I became good friends with him and once I told him my story about my low salary, the same I had started with nine months before. I don't know how he did it, but next day I was told that from now on I was worth fifty dollars more a month, a total salary of three hundred monthly. Considering my needs, it was a drop in the bucket. I continued to be helped with a lot of overtime.

Now Leon was studying in Vienna, at the "Akademie Fuer Angewandte Kunst" the Academy for Applied Art. Leon was always practical and he was good in many things. He knew that with "free painting" only, he would great difficulty to make a living and in this Academy the teaching was more commercial<sup>ly</sup> oriented. He took subjects like art photography, graphics and the like, in which he needed to round his knowledge. I sent him some extra money that he goes and stays for a while in Villach, to his grandparents, before reaching Vienna. It was the first time he was with them and Martha's two sisters still living there. Everyone enjoyed it.

I wrote to Johny and Trixie in Vienna to seek information about that Academy and forward it to Leon in Francfort. When he arrived in Vienna, they took him to live in their apartment for a few weeks, which was very helpful. They knew him as an infant. All the time Leon was in Vienna, he was a welcome guest in their home. It pays to keep friendships alive over the years.

This winter was very critical for my finances, still keeping four adults in school and one working and so moderately earning. I did all kinds of savings



cutting constantly corners. First I rarely took the bus. I used to read well the advertising in the newspaper and go to several supermarkets to buy in each only what was on sale. I memorized prices. At noon, I had a sandwich with some leftover from home and I bought only a bowl of soup. Sometimes it was only the soup with much bread. I became an expert in buying from sales, also in downtown department stores. It was tiring, but it was a must.

Everyone among the several refugees we were meeting, thought that we are wrong. The solution was at hand if everyone went to work and leave alone all our education plans. I was decided not to, and in spite of all, we all liked to be in school. At the office my behaviour looked strange among all these people who did things in an affluent manner. I avoided having a cup of coffee in the vending machine as every honest person did. I had in my drawer a jar of instant coffee bought in sale and a cup I brought from home. I went twice a day at least to the washing room, left that hot water faucet to run and filled my plastic cup. I put in it my coffee and some sugar. I saved weekly about one dollar fifty, not bad. We cut out all and every recreation, except the children with their friends.

With us it was much hope in the air, obsession or may be vision for the future as the year 1960 arrived. We were lucky people to arrive where we were and I did not want to throw that luck in the gutter, like everyone was telling me to do. In fact, I had nothing to loose in case of failure and it is exciting to put real goals and strive for them with all your might. Martha was in school struggling and it was so hard for her. She was as strong as ever. It took strength to continue that. She went in the morning to work on hair of women under the guidance of teachers. There were theoretical lessons to follow and books to read. Osteology is the science of bones and myology of muscles, chemistry on bleaching and hair tinting, trichology is the science of hair, electricity application was to be learned, diseases of skin and hair and related ones affecting them had to be studied, ethical matters, behaviour and management had to be considered and there were examinations to be given in that College of Beauty.

In the evening, as she came home, she had to care about our household, cooking, cleaning, washing and everything. Aliza helped when she happened to be home. Martha was sometimes in tears and exhausted, but there was no other way than up and on. I helped her with the home work, but I could not do much because I knew nothing of all that.

Aliza was in the eleventh grade. Her English was by far not on the level though much better than before. I helped her also with her home work in the evenings. She was now seventeen, a real pretty and reasonable girl. She had never dated a boy simply because in the old country there was no such thing for young girls like that as dating American style. But now, it was different. With the "Habonim" she got to be a member last year, several young boys were attracted to her. Her preference was a young man of nineteen, freshman at the University of Minnesota, one of the three sons of a prominent family in town. Since then, the two of them, Aliza and Stanley, were always together and he often came to us and he became like a son to us, he learned to like our food and everything. It was a beautiful love. A couple of years later they married. He was the only man this girl has ever gone with.

With Daniel was also not easy, but it could be done in spite of everyone saying, it can't be done. He learned enough English to speak, but not enough to enter the senior twelveth grade in High School. He was now over nineteen and too old for High School. Then, they had a regulation that for a boy from abroad to graduate from High School, he has to study at least two years. Time was against us and so was the lack of background for Daniel. Mr. Rackner took this over with the School counsellor and they came to a strange arrangement. Daniel would be registered officially in the eleventh grade and they would try to make him participate to lessons of the twelveth grade, where feasible. Of course, he would not graduate. The counsellor would make a particular report at the end of the school year to the committee of admissions of the U. of Minnesota to give the necessary tests to the boy for registration as a regular student. Then we will see. Now Daniel had to work hard. I helped with the homework evenings too.



I was in virtually behind everyone, prodding, encouraging, advising and I had to harmonize action of everyone in the context of all the others, which no individual in my household would do correctly. I dealt on a thing at a time and I had to distribute our resources according to needs of each sector and person. It was not easy because the needs were many and the resources inadequate. Sometimes I had problems as I tried to solve problems. I avoided absolutely any indebtedness to the amazement of everyone, sometimes including my own people. But in the long run this policy saved us. Only in time of acute need, I took money from the Bank in loan and paid it back in six or twelve months. No charge accounts, no purchases on the instalment plan.

Late in spring of 1960, Martha graduated from that Beauty College. This was not enough. She had to have the operators licence from the State Board in the Capitol of St. Paul, that is pass examinations, in two parts, work and theory. Hair-cutting, shampooing, massage, nail treatment, etc. she passed brilliantly, but on the theoretical part she failed. Six hundred fifty questions, true or false, all in high English. Again to that school for one month, which in fact was really better English learning and familiarizing with the terms of the questions. This time she passed and had her beauty operator licence, an achievement per se. A woman of just over fifty.

She found work in a small beauty saloon in our neighborhood. Our benefit was double. First we stopped paying those forty dollars tuition monthly and then she earned about forty to fifty Dollars a week. It was high noon because I had many plans in mind. One was Danny going to study at the University, a farfetched dream, then Leon transferring from Vienna to Munich for more studies in other art fields and specializations and I preparing for doing something than sitting at that office only, translating in seven languages and receiving about sixty dollars a week and another twenty sometimes in overtime after taxes. I had to find out to do something on the side.

In the summer of 1960 I decided to get out and get acquainted with America

It was grandiose thinking involving time, money and eating your cake and having it too, but if I wanted to try exports or imports as I thought, I had to know the country. Since nearly two years and I was nowhere. As in 1959 I did not take my one week of vacation, they agreed to give me two weeks. All the money I would master in cash was about eighty Dollars after everything else provided. I went on the road.

In New York I had two old friends my age from the Jewish neighborhood of Athens. Both were living in New York since six years or so. I exchanged letters with them and more with the one I was more close, named Abraham Battino. He wrote me, I can stay with his family. The ticket both ways by Greyhound bus was around fifty five dollars. This left me enough pocket money. Some people insisted that with that kind of money you don't go to vacation in New York for two weeks. I disagreed.

At the bus terminal in New York both friends waited for me that evening and the reunion was joyful. Battino had three teenage boys and a very little girl. Only she was born in America. He had a stand in a municipal market in the Essex street, near the Bowery and the Brooklyn Bridge. This area was once a compact Jewish neighborhood, but now nearly everything and everyone was Spanish or Puerto Rican. You could only see the main Jewish institutions decaying all around. Battino with family lived in a miserable apartment for forty or fifty dollars a month rent, on the fifth and highest floor on Delancey and ~~Allen~~ Allen Streets, no elevator and you had to go the steep and dark wooden staircases which was a tiring adventure in itself. They had three small rooms, of which the one was also the kitchen and a small den used also to store things. In that den, before the window leading to the fire escape iron staircase, there was a bed and it was for me.

I was advised to keep closed the window at all times during those hot nights. I was told, if alone home, to never open the door to anyone knocking unless I was sure I know/ell who was. I received more admonitions like that. Opposite my window was a movie with a shouting loudspeaker up to late night, praising the moving in Spanish. At least I understood what it was saying.



New York fascinated me. I had read so much about the town that I knew approximately what I wanted to see and to know. For thirteen days I roamed the town to all possible directions. Battino, in the municipal market, sold pots and pans and all kinds of related ware, all hung from wooden frames, as in the old country. Nearly all the buyers were new in the country, from Balkan or Puerto Rico. Battino learned just a few words in each language, be Bulgarian, Albanian, Turkish or even Arabic, the latter for use of the Lebanese. It was much work and poor profits, six days a week, in cold and rain and heat. But he was happy.

My other friend, Giverul, was the son of the Rabbi of Athens when we were young children, before he died. Giverul had two children and lived in Brooklyn. I went for a couple of days to live in his home. He imported in small scale various foodstuffs from Greece, a one man operation and as his English was insufficient, I helped him whenever it was anything in writing to Banks and Authorities. He sent me to Minneapolis his needs and I made the work and sent it to him. As he and his wife worked, I went around a little in Brooklyn, of which I had heard so much. Once I went from there by foot to Coney Island and remained there up to evening before returning to Manhattan, to Battino. Very interesting.

Battino could not understand why I was strolling in town so much and every day and why, being in vacation, I was not going to a park to relax. I told him that I had much nicer parks in Minneapolis. I came here to see New York and I do just that. I went much on Broadway and around, from Wall Street all along to uptown. Every hour or two I sat at a bench to relax. I went in stores, drugstores, caffeterias, churches, everything worth looking in my way. At noon, I ate a piece of pizza for fifteen cents or something similar and sometimes I had a coffee. In the evening I had a good dinner at Battino's who was disappointed I did not show for lunch at noon. Sometimes I took the subway, I bought every day the paper. In twelve days I had spent average one dollar a day, including my cigarettes.

Now, I had a surplus in my pocket of nearly ten dollars. I borrowed an other five from Battino and I bought Greek foodstuffs, goat milk cheese, olives,

olive oil and the like and took the way back to Minneapolis, about thirty five hours by bus. This excursion was very educational for me.

Martha worked now in a small beauty salon in a very nice neighborhood as the only operator, owned by a kindly man name George, <sup>he</sup> ~~who~~ and his wife were barbers both. In the front was the barbershop and in the back the beauty salon. It was at the lake Calhoun with a fine following, women from the residences around. She <sup>earned</sup> about fifty to sixty dollars a week after taxes, which was not bad.

Now, we had the complicated matter with Daniel. It was exceptional to want to enroll in the University without first graduating from High School. It was done as programmed. They accepted Danny to pass tests and examinations. He did and he failed. His general knowledge of everything, including handling English, was insufficient. He came to me in the office to tell me that, greatly disappointed and not knowing what to do. I asked him either to go back and talk it out with the U. counsellor, to ask him to give us a chance, even on probation, or I will go to the counsellor and try it myself. He said, he will try it first. He was encouraged by my remark that no one is really defeated, unless he believes that he really is.

If you ask an American to please give you a chance to prove yourself and he takes you seriously, he invariably will give you that chance and if you succeed, he will be very happy. Attached to the University was a School called General College. If you failed to enter the U. for any reason, you could prepare yourself in that school for two years at the most. It was only preparatory, no credits. Once it was explained to me that too many students dropped soon from that General College and the average really acquiring to take what it takes to be a regular student at the U. was very low, only about six percent. We took the chance and we agreed with Danny that he will push hard and I will be always behind him. It was not much, but much better than nothing.

I succeeded putting Danny on part time work in my office, at NAPCO. Again the son of the president helped. The pay was little, only one dollar thirty five



per hour. He could work any hour he had, up to eight or nine o'clock evening, any day they had no lessons at the College. He could make an average of twelve to twenty hours a week. It was helpful.

I bought a used car for Danny for two hundred fifty I borrowed from my Bank. It was a Sedan Fairlane Ford of a few years back. It was the first car that ever a Sevilla in Greece or in America had. Danny had his driver's licence on the first try after a few days learning from a friend. He needed that car very much and the family needed it too, especially in winter, in the cold and the snow. Danny was signing and handing me his paycheck every Friday to the amazement of everyone in the office. They could not understand how a boy of nearly twenty one was handing his paycheck to his father like that. I gave him a little money for gasoline and incidentals, all on a strictly basis.

Time passed routinely, constantly trying to master problems, to provide for everything, to cover needs evenly and according to importance. Now Leon was studying in Munich, Germany, at the "Staetische Schule für Bildende Kuenste", the Town Academy for Performing Arts. I sent him a minimum of eighty to one hundred dollars a month. With what he earned in part time work occasionalley, he could manage covering his elementary needs. Often, I could not send him all that money in one time during the month and I had to sent him smaller amounts weekly sometimes.

In 1961 things were going as scheduled. Daniel was doing as well as it could be in the G.College and it was promising that we may reach our goal. Aliza this year would graduate from High School. She had not yet mastered all her difficulties with language and background knowledge, but she was advancing satisfactorily and she certainly would graduate normally. Stanley, who always was with her and coming in our home so often, helped her with her studies. But there was something else with Aliza.

While Martha, I and Daniel could not draw a line, Aliza already before we came in America, had shown an emphasized talent in art, in painting and sculpture, not unlike Leon, though the talents of Leon were more manysided and started

much earlier in childhood. Now her talent, especially in painting was developing greatly and well. She wanted to take Fine Arts in College and Stanley was enthusiastically for it. She was reading much and practicing much.

That summer of 1961 we started action about coming of Leon from Germany to us. He was studying there and in Austria since four years and since over three years he was separated from our family. Receiving the American visa of permanent residence was no problem for him as he was born in Austria where there was always a sufficient quota available for immigration in the States and we were in the States since nearly three years. I wrote a letter to the American Consulate of Munich, he filled the questionnaire, submitted the required certificates. The whole operation would cost me about six hundred dollars of which I had the half and NAPCO agreed to loan me the other half without interest, to withhold fifteen dollars a week from my pay. I arranged that someone from HIAS receives him in New York and I would go to Chicago to meet him. He arrived from Amsterdam on a Dutch ocean liner. Everything was as scheduled and in October he was with us in Minneapolis.

Minneapolis was not the right place for Leon to work in his field. It was New York. He was now specialized in many fields other than painting, as theater arrangements, book illustrations and the like. We found work for him at an advertising company, but it was temporary, for three or four weeks only. I had now to find a way for him to relocate to New York, settle and work there. I had no funds and had no reliable friends there who could help. I was sure, I needed time for the solution and later found it.

It was in December, on a Sunday evening. The parents of Stanley, or Stan as we called him, were in our home for dinner. Joseph, the father of Stan was a short strong husky man on his early sixties and Natalie, his mother an educated smart lady. They had together a real estate business and owned a number of buildings with dozens of apartments each which they rented, a good business. He was a native of Poland and came in the States as a very young man while she was born in St. Paul, Minnesota. They were working hard, certainly harder than they should.



After they left, Stan and Aliza told us that they want to get married. They were engaged since long, but it was still early for a marriage and I knew that his parents were not for that, at least right now. There was vague talk about that, but for next summer, after the end of the school year. Aliza had started just three months before taking arts at the U. of Minnesota. He was taking engineering, but as he had not enough inclination for mathematics or for some other reason, he decided to switch and to study to be a Rabbi, as his father once in his youth was. I could not understand.

I asked Stan what his parents were thinking on that and he replied, it is not important. They wanted to get married during the Christmas vacation. She was nineteen and he was twenty three. I was pleased because he was the best that we would ever dream for our only daughter. He said, he will manage with his parents. We were happy to consent.

My problem was the same as always. Not enough funds to cope with. No question of a dowry, but the marriage expenses had to be on the family of the bride which was not very much, but it was much for me. We had an only daughter and we wanted to have for her a nice marriage. The women found to buy in sale a pretty wedding gown in a good price. For one hundred dollars more they bought shoes and a few other things. Friends of Aliza accepted to be bridesmaids and made their own identical dresses. We bought a new dress for Martha. We located two slightly used tuxedos for my two boys to be best men together with a brother of Stan. His other brother was in school abroad. We had had to do the best out of what we had and could. We did.

We sent printed invitations, to our acquaintances and some people at NAPCO, the company I worked, in all about thirty people. The mother of Stan sent nearly one hundred fifty. They made in all three showers and gathered a lot of very useful things. A very helpful institution the <sup>br</sup>bridal shower, especially for people like us. We had a catering service in the Synagogue main hall for two hundred, only coffee, sweets, cookies and the like while we managed to have a few

bottles of liquor on the side.

The wedding was in the great hall of the main Synagogue of Minneapolis and it was a memorable evening for us and especially for me, a sort of crowning of my past struggle and efforts. The president and some other management people of my company were there bearing presents. Several acquaintances from the Plymouth avenue in North Minneapolis where we lived, were there. And from the grooms side there were a good number of well-to-do people. Leon was our photographer. We had rehearsed the ceremony and now it was perfect with nuptial music and song.

Then downstairs into the nicely decorated hall, the long table laid by the caterers and the high standing wedding cake. We stood there as all of the invited paraded to shake hands and congratulate. A memorable evening. It costed me six hundred dollars except the cost for the catering and the renting of the hall in the Synagogue, both to be paid later. I had to borrow three hundred from my Bank payable in twelve months.

The newlyweds had a small beautiful apartment in a centrally located building of seventy apartments belonging to his parents. It was alright. Soon they took up their lives in the University.

At every time in life things happen, but those days things seemed to happen faster with us. It was always my concern to face problems promptly as they came and not let them gain more height and width by neglect and postponment. And now we had Daniel.

In school he was succeeding. Though he was in the General College less than one and a half year, they passed him as a regular student to the SLA (sciences, liberal arts) of the U.of Minnesota, under a six month probation. It was what we were striving for. He worked always in my office at all hours he could take away from his hard study endeavour. In that office he acquired a girl friend, a nice girl. They were much together with Carol. Now, Daniel came to <sup>me</sup> ~~by~~ and said, he wants to get married. It was evident that it was the worst time in his life for it, just starting to be a real student in college and I counting my pennies and Carol, a goo-



girl, from a decent family of no ample means.

I tried to dissuade Danny or at least to make postpone this for later. I did not succeed. He was always close to me and listened to me, but not this time. In January they married in small circle with very few people present. Carol worked now in the office of an other company. She was a junior accountant. Daniel was only twenty two and she was nineteen. He promised to me solemnly that he will stay school. I promised to continue paying his tuition as I did in the past, as long as needed. It was not such a bad marriage. I was upset because it was too early up to the point of irresponsibility. Time proved, I was wrong.

They rented a small inexpensive apartment. She earned her money and he continued giving all his free time to work. I and Martha helped a little by buying this or that for them.

In the same January of 1962, the news came that Pinhas had died, very shocking news for me as in spite of all, I was very close to him even when I was very far. I remember how he took me from the hand to bring me to a park or to a movie when I was less than ten years old, those small cinemas with the silent movies. Then all the years and all the incidents with him. I remembered the last day we left Athens to go to America. I told to the taxi to stop before Pinhas shop, and he could do it at the opposite sidewalk. Pinhas came running to us like a young man. I came out of the car and we embraced again though the previous evening he was with us to bid us farewell. He looked so frail. Just there and then, I knew, we will not see each other anymore in life. He died from heart unsufficiency caused by diabetes and who knows from what else. It took me weeks to recover. He was the first among us to go after living his life. He was nearing sixty three.

Leon wanted to rent a small place to live and work, a sort of studio. Minneapolis was not the place for him and he could have only temporary jobs, some outside his main talents. He worked briefly for a theater, he illustrated expertly a book for children and the like. He rented an inexpensive small apartment near downtown, where he had his small studio and his many books. Martha helped him as

much as she could with money when needed, which means often, in and out of my knowledge.

Anyway, life went on, in constant striving and with progress once in slow and once in more rapid pace, seemingly more or less on the lines of our initial "five year" plan. Now, nearing summer of 1962, I decided to show America also to Martha, to have for her a vacation after those many hard years.

I organized it in the best manner and the most economically I could. First in Toronto was living since eight years the sister of my sister's husband Rina husband and we were well acquainted with her well. We wrote to her about our coming. Her husband was my friend since childhood. They had two teen age daughters going to school, he worked in accountancy and she in sewing for a department store. Then in Boston lived the brother of Rachel, the wife of my brother Errico. In New York, Stanley had the uncle of his father, a well known painter and restorer of art who has had a colorful life. Now in his early seventies, was active and living in a big apartment in New York which was like a museum with objects of art everywhere, all walls covered, all places crammed. He worked now only in restorations. He was renowned as a good portraitist. They were waiting for us.

In July we went by Greyhound bus to Toronto and our friends waited for us at the terminal. We were with them for four or five enjoyable days and have shown us places. Canada reminded me to England and quite different from America. Then we went to Boston. Isaac Cohen and his wife Ketty were very glad to see us. Since twelve years we did not meet. They were in America for seven years. He worked occasionally in factories making brushes but he was more time out of work than working. ~~He~~ Ketty worked at a Robert Hall factory of men's suits and coats. Their only teenage daughter going to school. They had married for the first time to each other late and both were in their mid-fifties. They had a spacy apartment and we had a few agreeable days with them.

Isaac had two big problems. He could only work in painting brushes and nothing else. It was the thing he was at all his life, but here the variety was



unknown to him and he could not catch that brushes were also made by machinery and not only manually. His second problem was that he could not learn a single word in English. I remember, once we were down town and then strolled in a huge park. He told me that when out of work, more time than not, he used to buy a newspaper in Greek from New York and sit there on a bench to read it slowly. I had the idea of asking him about the name of this park and he replied, he did not know it. I was surprised that since seven years he was coming here innumerable times and he never knew where it was. I asked a passersby about it. He looked at me for a moment. Are you kidding, he said, this is Boston Commons park. I repeated it to Isaac and remarked. Now you know, repeat it a few times that you don't forget /it.

Then we went in New York and stayed with the Shiffs, the relatives of our son in law. They lived in a very tall and distinguished building on Riverside Drive and 98th street, on the eighth floor and from there you could see the river and the opposite shore of New Jersey, a breathtaking view. Since then, we have several times stayed with the Shiffs, the best people I ever have known and they were often very useful to us to this very day. Whenever in New York, anyone of us, we have to go there and see them or stay with them.

I omitted a detail. As we were in Boston at Isaac Cohen's house, we received a cable from Minneapolis. It was from Daniel and told us that he had his first child, a boy. We were thrilled and at the same time fearful that this would compel Daniel to drop out from College. Our fears ~~w~~proved to be exaggerated. When we returned in Minneapolis, I learned that the circumcision was performed already in the presence of Stanley and Leon. The name of Michael Jason was given to the newborn. We bought for him in New York a small golden Magen David with a chain.

There was now the matter with Leon. Minneapolis was not the place for him. He lost time there and he was unhappy. I had someone in San Francisco and wrote there for information. I was not very encouraged. This left only New York, where nearly all the activity in art, theater and the like is concentrated. The case was similar like that time in Germany with Fritz and Hilde. I had talked to Mr.

Shiff about Leon. Now, I asked again my son if he has any works ready to give me. He had about thirty slides in color of a number of his past works. I took a week off and went again to New York in October to stay with the Shiffs. An evening, I started showing the slides to Mr. Shiff. As he saw five or six of them, he did not want to see any more and asked me that Leon comes to stay in their home and then we will see. Back in Minneapolis, I told Leon to prepare and end October he left by bus to New York. My funds were again low. I could buy him the bus ticket and give him seventy five dollars only. I was sure, he would make it. He did.

With my work at NAPCO it was the same. I was the man in the whole company for any matter in languages. Translations were brought daily on my desk. As too much time was in my hands empty because I was very fast with translating, I worked on the side helping in filing or something else. I earned always the same money, no raise since years. Everyone had forgotten how and for what I was hired. I was trying to create a future for the family and it was always my firm intention to try a business of my own, at least on the side. I had already tried my hand to organize exports and I conducted some correspondence with friends in Greece and a number of manufacturers in the States. I knew that to it I needed a rather costly organization. On the contrary with imports. I decided on them. It remained only to find out what to import, from whom and to whom to sell. I concentrated on that.

The start was an ad in a Greek magazine I saw offering the Greek woven shoulder hanging bags imported in quantities in the States and worn widely. I wrote to that manufacturer. In telephone books, I found addresses of handicrafts shops in a few other towns. I wrote hundreds of letters. I located manufacturers of other handicrafts in Greece, ceramics, copper and brass articles, costume jewelry, dolls and other articles. I was writing hundreds of letters and I received very few replies, but I received some. In spring I took my vacation of two weeks and visited a few States on the way to Canada, Toronto and Montreal. I could offer in lower prices because I was a one man operation from my own home. It is a long story. It took me a few years of endeavour, but I succeeded to create the business importing from Greece, Israel and India. If I would be younger, I would be



in a position to organize a much bigger business. When I was so far, I was nearing sixty. At the beginning I did not import anything myself. I used to receive orders which I sent to the producers abroad, they shipped directly to my importers, the latter paid at the Bank and I received my profit margin.

Daniel had a hard time studying and working. In my company's workshop we had a job for him paying him rather well. They called it time keeper, he started at four thirty afternoon and he work up to one o'clock in the morning. At eight o'clock in the morning he had to be at the U.Campus for classes or reading in the library. It was up to two or three o'clock in the afternoon. A dog's life. On weekends he was so exhausted that sometimes he slept for fifteen hours in one time. May be, just because he was married and had a child, he sustained this pace. We were always close.

Leon stayed for a few months with the Shifts and helped in restorations, especially of paintings. Then he rented a small apartment on the fourth floor in the seventy sixth street at Riverside drive. He made it a small studio and lived there. He did not want to work for others. At the beginning he worked temporarily as a janitor in a building and then for an advertising company. Now, he had his small studio for restorations and started to get known around. His studio was too small, inconvenient because no elevater and not located in a good place. In one year or so, he rented a better studio in Lexington avenue at sixtieth Street and he had more business, including a small gallery. And then it was the way up.

In 1963 Aliza and Stan went to Los Angeles, California. He was to study at a seminar there. Aliza registered to an Art Academy there for study. She was doing now nice works in art. They settled in Hollywood. I continued helping them a little as before.

Martha continued working at the same beauty shop at the Lake Calhoun and the owner George and his wife were by now our friends. As a vacation, I sent her in June to California to be three weeks with Aliza and Stan and she had a good time there. Then, in August 1963 I went again to Canada and New York and other

States trying my business. When I came back home, I had a big surprise. I found a front room of our apartment equipped fully as a beauty salon. Martha located the equipment second hand from a particular shop, let it installed there, and she was in business. It was something.

To open your own beauty shop, it is not enough to have the operator's licence, You must have also the manager's licence which is a particular licence given after examinations. A few months before Martha acquired it from the State board. Our apartment was in the first floor, but it could never be a street shop there. Only private clients should be at hand and I doubted if Martha could have enough of them, but it proved that she had. It was strange that Martha became such a good operator and stylist that everyone believed, she was highly trained in Europe. Customers came on appointment<sup>y</sup>, not very many, but enough to keep it going. For Martha, who had an operation last year for varicose veins on her legs, it was advantageous. When she had no work, she could relax and take care of our home.

We lived now alone the two of us. Since that December 1961 and January of 1962, when in one month all our three children left home to make their own lives, we were with Martha alone in our home. In January of 1963 we took a better apartment in a nice building owned by <sup>the</sup> father of Stanley, our son in law. In the same apartment lived Stan and Aliza, though a couple of months after they left for California. Now, Martha had her small business, I was still working at NAPCO and I was building my own small business in the office at the empty times I happened to have from translations and evenings and weekends at home. The outlook started to show promise for us.

At the end of 1963, as the end of our fifth year in America approached, We, that is I, Martha and Daniel, started with the necessary procedure to have the U.S. citizenship. Finally, in February of 1964 we were sworn by a judge, all fifty two new Americans. An evening, in a solemn ceremony and dinner with speeches, we were offered our citizen certificates by Mr. Mondale, then Attorney General of Minnesota and now a U.S. Senator. We were happy and felt respectable.



In summer of 1964 we learned Aliza was pregnant and it was good news for all in our family. Leon in New York was establishing well. I went to see him two times a year and Martha also travelled there. We always stayed with the Shifts in Riverside drive. Daniel was doing well at the University and he had now a part time job in the research department there because for a time he had taken chemistry. Since last year he was also teaching Hebrew in a sunday school and gave private lessons in homes evenings to boys who would be soon Bar Mitzvah. It was better than working up to after midnight in that machinery shop, though it was always a fight. My little business started to take shape and throw some profits. I ceased buying from the Salvation Army Store my clothing because with what I had I could go on for years. I bought a few things needed for our home, some furniture pieces, a defective new carpet and the like.

Life was rolling, moving, advancing for us. Carol, the wife of Daniel was now also pregnant. On July seventh 1965, Aliza had her child, a boy. They were already two years in Hollywood, Los Angeles. Now Stan had an educational assignment for London, England for one year. They both came to Minneapolis and soon left for England. They considered the birth of their first child as a lucky, on the seventh month, the seventh day, at seven ~~of~~ ~~of~~ o'clock in the evening, seven being a lucky number for the Jews.

In June that same year, Daniel graduated from the University. When I saw him there among the many other young people in rows, wearing that long black garment like a Roman toga and the flat hat on his head with the long black tassel descending on the side, I was very moved. It seemed unbelievable. The first Seville I knew ever to receive a College degree. But there he was. His major was political sciences and his minor history. Quite a feat.

For a couple of months he worked at the office of a furniture store and then he landed a job with a very prestigious company, Honeywell, as a coordinator analyst, a delicate affair for which they trained him on the job. It was again high noon because in September of that year his second child was born, an other

son. They named him Adam Joel. That year also they bought a pretty one family house in a nice neighborhood in St. Louis Park with a small payment down. But now I was not apprehensive as with their first child. Daniel and Carol could take good care of themselves.

I had now connections with exporters in India and had a few good orders. I also started to import a few selling articles in stock from Greece and India, which gave me a better profit. I was always careful with money, but I did not need anymore running from supermarket to supermarket to save pennies from this or that. I had not a car because I did not need one. We were in walking distance from downtown and had three lines of busses passing just near our door. I had even always some money in the Bank which I did not need and it was increasing.

In summer of 1966 Aliza and Stan with their one year old son, would return to the States and before doing so they wanted to visit our people in Greece and I wanted them very much to do so. They were always tight with money and I sent them a little every month, as I was doing for years, to supplement. They needed it though they were frugal and careful. I conceived the plan to send Martha to Greece. Then I financed the trip of Aliza and her family from London to Greece by railway through Italy. They met with Martha in Athens and had fifteen very agreeable days with our family. From there my sister Esther accompanied them to London through Italy, Switzerland and Belgium. In a couple of weeks, my sister returned to Greece and all the others proceeded to Southampton to board the ocean liner to New York. I and Leon received them at the pier in New York.

Now Leon was more successful. He rented a better and more centrally located studio on Madison Avenue at sixty fourth street, of which he made an elegant affair with a gallery for paintings, conservation of art and the like. But his main job was restorations mostly of paintings. He had now a well known name in New York as an expert. He was consulted and called to valuable collections, worked for Insurance Companies, Museums and such Organizations. To day, the Sevilla Art Studio on 741 Madison Avenue is a name with the formative arts circles in New York.



Stanley continued his studies in Cincinnati, Ohio. They rented a nice one family house. Martha went often to visit, every three months once. I went too, either as I travelled for business once or twice a year, or when there was a long weekend and I added a day or two. I was always working at NAPCO. In 1965, after I declared squarely I go and quit, they gave me a small raise. I was worth more than that, I felt, translating in five to seven languages and doing also serious accountancy work. I was so fast in my work, that I always had empty time which I used to organize my own private business. Only this kept me still there and also that I had not enough years of work to qualify for a satisfactory Social Security benefit later.

In the summer of 1967 I went to Greece for seven weeks, the first time since I left eight years before and the reunion with all my people was a happy one. I let make on measure for myself five suits, the first ones I was buying new for me since eighteen years. In all those years I was in close contact with my people in Athens and a little more than that.

Already a few months after we arrived in America at the end of 1958, I started sending ten dollars a month to Pinhas to solve his eternal problem, where to find money in summer to pay the rent of his small shop. I knew that he was very shy to go anywhere for a loan and if so, it was a humiliation for him. His rent amounted at that time about fifteen dollars a month and he could have the little difference from somewhere. A little later, I was sending him a little more and then also something to my sister Rosa who started having health problems. My people could not understand it. For me it was an obligation and I saved this little money from my own personal needs. When Pinhas died, I sent the money monthly to Errico who was in bad shape with severe emphysema. After the death of Pinhas he took over the umbrella repair shop and tried to earn something out of it. The only real income they had was the moderate salary of their daughter Lisa who worked in some office. They had cared for me all of them, and my family in previous lean years.

I never stopped to this very day these small remittances to Errico and Rosa

though I increased them a little and a few times throughout the years. They assure me that it is helpful.

In 1967, as I returned from Greece, Martha went to Austria to stay with her old parents and her sisters for a few weeks. She was also for a while in Vienna with Johny and Trixie. It was a kind of sentimental trip for her. Her father, a kindhearted man, died next year nearing eighty. Her mother died two years later.

Our life was getting to be easier and there was steady progress in our family. Daniel was by now a junior executive with Control Data Corporation and after a varied training, he was talking about computers as if he would have handled them all his life. It was a very promising position as liaison manager for Mediterranean countries and he was sent to several countries in Europe to negotiate about computers. He was very often to embassies in Washington for the same. In 1970 however, something happened that for other people became a disaster. Daniel with a multitude of other bright young people were laid off by the company, and it was the same for scores of thousands of executives in a great number of the biggest companies in the country.

For Daniel it ~~was~~ turned out to be repairable. Though a brilliant future was cut off, after a couple of months, he could have a position with a sizeable manufacturing company in marketing. He worked up successfully and to-day he is the marketing manager with ample activity and he earns well. He is now thirty four. His two sons are exceptionally bright. Mike Jason is twelve and Adam Joel is nine. At this writing, they are expecting a third child. The American dream all the way. Very active, two cars, an affluent life and way of doing things, they will have soon an other house which just now is under construction on a lot he bought. Indeed, a long way for Daniel. He is very good to us and we visit him often as possible to us. Carol is a very good mother and wife. That marriage proved to be successful in everything.

In 1968 Aliza had a second child, a girl. In 1969 Stanley was ordained a Rabbi and he had to be in the Army in the rank of a captain. He was assigned to Fort Bragg, North Carolina. We were very glad that finally they were indepen-



dent and self-sufficient.

It was time to get out of the company I worked for since ten years. Much was changed there. The president died suddenly in 1965 at age fifty six. One year later his brother, who had taken me into the company, died too at age fifty four. The president's son became the president, but now he was distant ~~and~~ for me. My business was steady and giving me a kind of permanent moderate income yearly. I had already my ten years required for Social Security benefits. I told them I was quitting, in 1969. Since ~~four~~ <sup>five</sup> years <sup>my pay</sup> was two dollars thirty five cents an hour. They offered me more money to stay. I refused. All our three children wanted us out of Minneapolis and the harsh winter. Alisa insisted to rent for us an apartment near Fort Bragg, in Fayetteville, N. Carolina, with the mild winters.

I asked Martha to close her small beauty salon and I will give her the money she earned. I sent Martha to North Carolina. They rented for us a dream one family house in a development in the midst of a pine forest. We were near our daughter and the two grandchildren. I devoted myself to my small business, often travelling to various places up to Minneapolis where I had some connections. Martha planted flowers and vegetables. We were acquainted with people at the Synagogue of Stan. Martha often travelled to Minneapolis or to New York to see Daniel and his family and ~~to New York~~, to Leon and the Shiffs. It was for us that rare period in the life of man, that we had nearly no problems. We lived simply and were content.

In 1970 Martha travelled to Greece and Austria. When she returned I went to Greece, to see my people and settle several matters with my business sources, mostly small workshop producing one kind of handicrafts. From there I went to Israel for the first time, after fourteen years. I always felt uneasy and somewhat guilty that we had to leave Israel. I always, to this day, I have been concerned about Israel and I did all what I could for that country in a positive way. Now, I was there, I visited a few friends, I went for a day in my Moshav Neveh Yamin. I found it nearly exactly as I left it, only that some people were opulent and affluent while others remained struggling for the daily bread. Many of the oldtimers were there, but there were also new faces. They received me cordially.

I enjoyed very much my trip to Israel. I was in Jerusalem, Haifa, Bethlehem and other places. An evening I went to Petah Tikvah to the Tnuvah vegetable and fruit depot. I met there a couple of people still working there since I had left. It was very friendly. As I went by ship back to Piraeus, we stopped for one day in Chyprus.

In 1971 Stan was transferred to Heidelberg, Germany and they left in summer. We could not live anymore there alone at the proximity of such a big military base. We decided to live in the nearby town of Charlotte, North Carolina where I had a close and famous friend, Mr. Harry Golden, the writer of many books. We liked the overall mild climate of the Carolinas and we did not know where else to go and live. At the end of 1971 we rented a very comfortable and roomy apartment not far from down town and since then we live there.

In spring of 1972 we decided that Martha will go to Heidelberg to be for a while with Aliza and family, and that in summer I would go there too and we would see what to do more. I could not stay very long because I had my small business, but for Martha there was all the free time. In July I went to Greece. Meantime Martha went to Salzburg and then to Villach, in her hometown, where we met in August. We stayed in that wonderful small town for nine days, really enjoyable. Her two brothers in law both had cars and had driven us every day up to the villages and places up in the pure mountains and valleys of extreme beauty. Then we went to Munich to the Olympics and we were so saddened with the tragedy of the slaughtering of the eleven Israeli athletes by the Arabs. Then it was to Nuerenberg where Stanley in the meantime was transferred and lived with family. I was for a couple of weeks with them before I went to Francfort to board my plane to New York. I left back Martha who wanted to go to Brussels to meet some of our friends.

I should now conclude this report. Daniel is doing well. A little before I arrived in Austria, he was there with all his family and they met with Martha. Now he was back in Minneapolis minding his and his family life. Martha finally



has all the time to enjoy life, read books, sew dresses for herself, visit children and grandchildren. Stan and Aliza are back in the States since summer of 1973. He left the Army and he is now a Rabbi in Teaneck, New Jersey. They bought a nice house, they are very active and content. Leon is doing well with his studio and other activities in New York. Daniel is often in New York and meets with Aliza and Leon. We were fortunate as we never had any serious health problems up to present. In the very recent years Victoria died. She had a heart condition. Victor, her husband lives now with his daughters, two of them still unmarried, an old broken man in his early seventies.

My brother Errico, age seventy three, is always on his feet though severely handicapped by his severe ~~ast~~ emphysema. ~~My brother Moshe~~ His wife Rachel also suffering from assorted ailments. They are very unhappy that their only daughter Aliza, age thirty seven, is still unmarried. My brother Moshe with the diabetic condition, is half blinded by it. But he still deals in leather articles peddling. I don't know how he can manage in such a deteriorating state of health. My brother in law Albert, the taylor, died last year. My remaining sisters are more or less well. Only Rosa has a severe arthritic condition and our youngest, Leah, has a chronic bronchitis bothering her greatly every winter. She is the most affluent among the sisters and always actively caring. Marco Mevorah, the blessed, the husband of Leah, is doing well. He is now in his late fifties, ~~being~~

We manage with Martha to be once a year in Europe. Nothing fancy, we do things on plan and economically. We have time in our hands. We love travelling and we enjoy. Myself, I go often to Israel, in pilgrimage and having some business connection there.

Is it the end? Not for me, not yet. I cannot stay still. I have still plans, goals, wishes and so does Martha. I go often to Florida for business and take out time to stroll in the far beaches, alone and reminishing. In towns I go often and know well, I go alone the streets for hours each time, slowly and watching people, buildings, institutions, everything and philosophizing. Cleve-

land, Detroit, Chicago, Minneapolis, Indianapolis, New York, are towns I feel well being there. I made good friends in them I am glad seeing them. I have been in many other places in America from California to Vermont. I am always curious to see new towns, to stroll in new places. I like America.

America the Beautiful.



C O N C L U S I O N

I have read some place this: "Everyone is a Moses. He wants to see the Promised Land in his own life time".

I can say that I always tried to attain my goals even in most adverse circumstances. The difference between people is how much each man strives to pursue his own goals, how willing he is to recognize his failures, correct his errors, pay the price for them. The past is for learning and evaluating, not for staying with it. The action for the future must be now, in the present.

To borrow from my dear friend Mr. Harry Golden. Only in America I could do it. Age fifty three, wife forty nine, thirty four dollars in the pocket, in a new vast country with no relatives, no friends in it, such ambitious goals, finally making it. The main ingredient, believe in it, work for it. Only in America.

I also read some place that: "Good chance and bad chance occur in every life. No two persons do the same with them. Some suck out every advantage. Some collapse at the first mischance". Once I asked my son Daniel as to whether it is fair that he was earning more than I did, I a man of age and experience. He replied: Dad, don't get upset. Do you have a degree from an American University? I just happen to have one. Of course, he was right.

The American dream. Only in America. Sometimes, in the secure hindsight of the present, I find myself analyzing past events. It must have helped not accepting defeat, searching for alternatives, trying further to locate other roads, techniques, pursuing, toiling stubbornly to correct. It takes some courage. There are so many excuses for not acting in time and vigorously on an adversity. Complacency is an enemy to every progress. Fatalism is an other.

Stopping to fight is stagnation because in life everything is solely movement. Struggling requires guts. There are very few really unsurmountable problems. It is only going ahead, insisting, trying, searching. Otherwise, you loose the battle before starting it. "Omnia difficilia ante quam facilia", It is always difficult before it becomes easier.

This is the story of my family since I can concretely trace it and this is this story of my own life and I consider both somewhat colorful. I put them on paper on the insistence of Mr. Harry Golden. One of the peculiarities in this is the long distances in time and the many countries involved.

My paternal grandfather was born in the eighteenth century, just before the end of it, when George Washington was still alive. My father was born in the early 1860's when Abraham Lincoln was the president of the United States and the Civil War was in full swing. I was born into the twentieth century, in the first decade of it. Chances are that the offspring of my grandchildren will be born into the twenty first century, a long way from the eighteenth of my grandfather.

Nobody chooses his parents nor the time or place of his birth. My father was born in Turkey. My maternal grandfather originated from Germany and my maternal grandmother from Italy. My mother came into the world in Egypt and I was born in Greece. My wife and my oldest son are natives of Austria, my second son was born in the island of Crete and my daughter in Athens, Greece. Finally all my grandchildren had their birth in the United States. It sounds somewhat confusing.

My family lived in Istanbul since the beginning of the sixteenth century without interruption. It is very doubtful if you can locate now any Sevillias still living in Turkey. My sister Rosa went a few times in Istanbul and she stayed in the home of a distant cousin of ours named Karydi. I corresponded with them a little in past years. I know that in <sup>France</sup> there was a branch of our family, that is in Marseille and in Paris and so was in Bulgaria.

In Israel I met a Sevilla from Istanbul, convincingly from my family, and for years we called each other cousin. Like us he immigrated to Israel at the same time we did. He was by seven years older than I and he was an electrician. He had a wife and an only teenage son. I lost their tracks after I left Israel in 1956. And I corresponded in the 1950's with some Sevillias from our Istanbul family who had established in Mendoza, Argentina. An old woman even said that she remembered having heard the story of my father when she was a little girl. From them I also learned that an other branch of our family had settled in Chile.

The flourishing Jewish population of Turkey has shrunk by now to an insignificant degree. A lot of old Jewish families disappeared already from Istanbul. Our Greek branch is also fading out because I am the only one who has sons and grandchildren who are bound to create an American branch of the Sevillias.



With Martha we are since forty years together. I don't know how I have been with her. I can only say, she has been good to me, good in everything, as a wife, a mother of our children as an "integrated" Sevilla. Nobody is perfect, but she has always been as perfect as one could expect. I was never fanatically religious and all my family has been somewhat liberal in this field. But Martha was and still is the most Jewish than all of us, because she is basically more religious than all of us. If she would not have crossed my path in life under such strange circumstances that winter in Vienna, I may have later married someone else and I might have an other course in life. I don't like to speculate about it. I am content with that incident and with her.

I feel that I am blessed having the children I have. Leon is a golden boy to us. Each time I or Martha are in New York, which is rather often, he gets out of his way in doing things for us, bringing us evenings to fine places and everything else to make us happy. We are good friends with Leon. Daniel is now totally integrated in the American life, but he still keeps the way of the old country in his behaviour ~~with~~ to me and Martha. And Aliza, as it always happens with an only daughter, is extremely good to us and she is especially close to her mother. We never needed any material assistance from our children. If need would be, I am sure we could count and rely upon them. I and Martha we are proud for our children. It is so relaxing and so good to be in their homes surrounded by the grandchildren.

Finally, we are very grateful to this country and to all those people who helped us to achieve the nearly impossible. All of us we feel that we belong to this country. Only in America. America the beautiful.







Leon Sevilla 1862 - 1924

Married

In

1896



Eloisa Weinberg 1880 - 1929

# Sevilla Family Ancestors



Daniel - born 1897



Pinhas - born 1899



Ericos - born 1901



Rosa - born 1903



Elias - born 1905



Moses - born 1908



Victoria - born 1910



Sara - born 1914



Esther - born 1918



Leah - born 1921



